



THE SKETCH BOOK OF
THE LADY SEI SHŌNAGON

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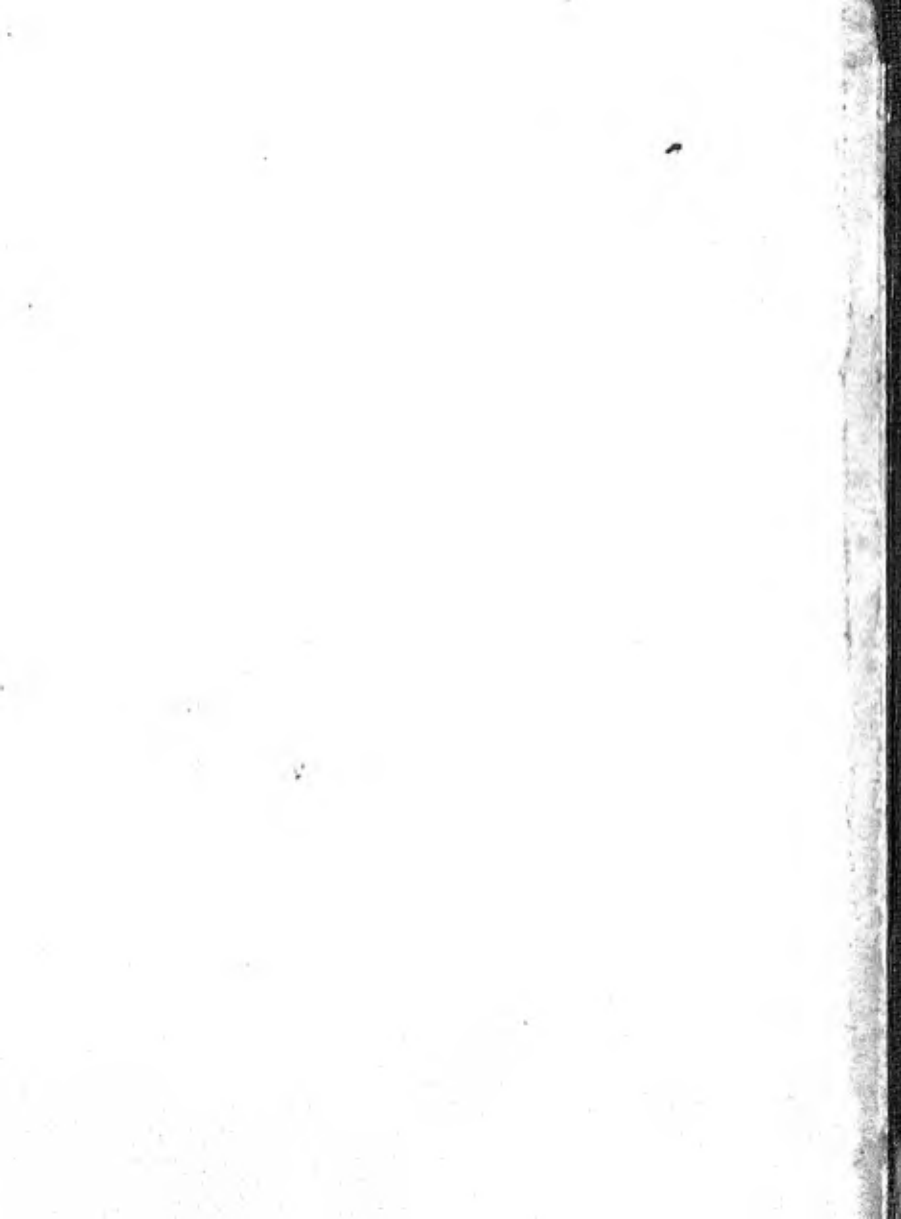
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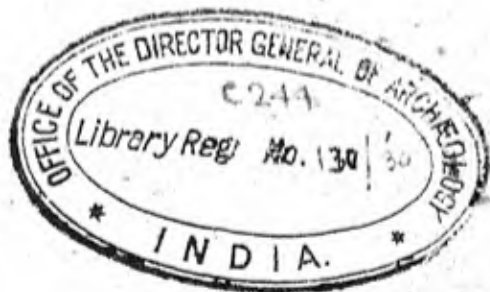
The Wisdom of the East Series Vol. 50.

EDITED BY

L. CRANMER-BYNG

Dr. S. A. KAPADIA

THE SKETCH BOOK OF THE
LADY SEI SHŌNAGON



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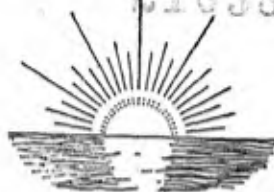
WISDOM OF THE EAST

THE SKETCH BOOK
OF THE
LADY SEI SHŌNAGON

TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE

BY NOBUKO KOBAYASHI

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
L. ADAMS BECK



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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

L. CRANMER-BYNG.
S. A. KAPADIA.

NORTHBROOK SOCIETY,
21, CROMWELL ROAD,
KENSINGTON, S.W.

INTRODUCTION

IN translating the *Makura no Soshi* (The Pillow Notes or Sketches), written by Sei Shōnagon during the years A.D. 991–A.D. 1000, from Japanese into English, Nobuko Kobayashi has rendered a service to literary knowledge in the West.

Naturally, the whole of a long book cannot be given in the present form, but she has translated it all, even to the minutest classifications of ideas and objects, and I have read through the whole in assisting her to make these selections. I have read it with the feeling that at last I had before me the real material of Sei Shōnagon's mind and reflections. At last, because so far as my knowledge goes, no translator has ever before rendered more than a comparatively small part of a book which is peculiarly dependent upon the whole for its effect upon the mind of the reader. Though only excerpts can be given here, the whole remains available when she thinks fit to publish it for the benefit of scholars and students of what is known as the Heian period in Japan. From that point of view her work is

invaluable, especially as she has collected a mass of illustrations which elucidate many references and give them life and interest. She has the advantage also of being herself Japanese, and in my opinion translation of a book of this sort (depending upon the author's personality) is always best done by the natives of a country, to whom its traditions and spirit are a natural heritage unpossessed by outsiders. This is doubly so where even the allusions and ceremonials are almost impossible of real understanding and rendering except by those to the manner born.

Nobuko Kobayashi has the further advantage of being a woman. This is a valuable aid in comprehending the very remarkable woman who wrote this book. Sei Shōnagon is herself the heaven-created heroine of a novel written by a modern Western woman. She presents unblushingly her meannesses, cruelties, inveterate vanity, her selfishness and preoccupation with sexual considerations under the light of her sharply cut vision of the motives of others and comfortable illusions as to her own. She presents also her fundamental hard-heartedness and coolness to the physical side of passion and her ignorance of any of its spiritual correlations. It is a part of this remarkable modernity that, though a member of the most spiritual and most metaphysical faith in the world, she is a rationalist pure and simple so far as any influence upon her

thought and conduct is derived from it. She takes the fullest part in its observances, for these are demanded of her by Court life. She makes a "retreat" now and then to a temple for the sake of rest and the Buddhist peace of the surroundings, but even then that sharp worldly eye is fixed not upon the peace of the surroundings but upon the goings and comings of the fashionable pilgrims in the fashionable routine of religion—and especially upon those of men of family and wealth.

No disillusioned man of the world could be more frankly a-moral than this lady of ancient Japan, and not only in the limited sense of the word but in all that constitutes conduct. That fact dominates the whole book. She is neither sincere, kind, nor true. She has the cold, brilliant sparkle of a diamond whose whole use is adornment, and adornment achieved at much cost to others. As depicted by herself, she is unloved and unloving. This may be deduced from her book, quite apart from the testimony of some of her gifted contemporaries and fellow-adventurers in literature. Apart also from tradition, it can be foreseen that her old age would be bitter and solitary. The book is really *Sei Shōnagon: A Self-Portrait*, and as such it has much value in addition to its historic value—great as that undoubtedly is. What would we not give for such a picture of a Saxon Court in England!

This portrait of herself is the more interesting because in drawing it she also recreated the Heian era of which she was the finished product: its faults and follies crystallise in her, but also its eternal worth to mankind, and more especially to its own land. I write this introduction in the heart of that land, and not a day passes without realisations of how much Japan owes to the seemingly dead culture which lives to-day and must live, I believe, in the hearts of the people, even if the rising tide of Western influence is destined to submerge Japan and reduce her to the grey uniformity of the West. This may yet be averted, but many portents visible since my last stay raise the question.

I can never unite with those who regard the culture of the Heian period as a somewhat contemptible form of decadence. Sei Shōnagon and her friends possessed a religion—the true worship of beauty—beauty in every manifestation of nature and art excepting only its ethical and spiritual aspects. Because they had not these their dominance could not last. Human affairs decline to be managed for long without them. But because they adored Beauty as her true acolytes, though only in her more phenomenal revelations, they are as immortal as their Divinity. Sei Shōnagon is a true priestess of her true faith. Beauty struck her upon a naked nerve even in the faith to which her spiritual ear

was closed. The Buddhist loveliness of rite and chant and gracious austerity fascinated her. "The word of the Lord was unto her as a lovely song," and enthralled her imagination on exactly the same plane as snow under a broad moonlight and long grass bowed with dew.

It is certain that Beauty was her religion, because to that she accommodated all her conduct. She had trained herself—a hard training—to such literary knowledge as included all the best of her time and made her own literary expression an example of the purest and most cultivated form in the Japanese language. It is always pointed to with the pride commanded by true achievement. She had trained herself also into every grace of manner thought desirable by a people more sensitive to gracious manners than any others in the world. In this behaviour and in dress and the understanding of exquisite ceremonies and traditions she excelled. She had absorbed the beauty of the Chinese ideographs which still remain the choicest form of human inter-communication. As I write, I look up to the alcove in my room where hangs a picture—yes, a picture!—a poem written by a hand long since dust, but so lovely in appearance that the characters themselves are a series of symbols conveying all the immense past of China and Japan, and all they have known of beauty. How much that is only those intimately familiar

with these countries and their peoples can understand to the full.

That familiarity is necessary in interpreting their values in relation not only to their own lives but to ours.

The formulas of the Heian period, if formulas one calls them, were, from their beginning, flourishing and fading, the children but also the parents of a very transcendent art in small things as in great, in literature (as in the famous *Nō* plays), in statuary (as in the famous wooden statues of famous men and of divinities), in pictures, lacquers, bronzes, and not only in these things, which while they indicate the status of a nation may be the especial property of the few, but also in the lesser things which concern the national daily life—such as household utensils, the charming patterns of dress-stuffs, the excellent refinement which gives chief value to little personal decorations unseen by the outward observer that yet content the inward sense of beauty of the possessor.

I am living near a little village in the mountains with humble people, but such of their possessions as are not Western still are beautiful. There is a handful of charcoal fire in my brazier—much the same as warmed Sei Shōnagon's elegant hands a millenium ago—and over it stands a little kettle, up which crawls what the West would consider a wholly unnecessary but most

lovable bronze crab. The bamboo pipe which constitutes my supply leads the mountain water in an ever-flowing stream into a large and lovely metal basin most delicately engraved. I look out upon a garden contrived to present the accord of trees, mountains, and water in perfection, but with as much economy of human labour as can be contrived. About me I see among the poorest the grace of manners which might not have been out of place at the Court of Kyōto. I have myself stayed for months in a Buddhist temple and can answer for it that things are much as they were in Sei Shōnagon's day and that she does not exaggerate the interest of the surroundings. These joys would not have been existent but for the *mantram* of beauty so faithfully received and transmitted by Sei Shōnagon and her friends.

Nor do I condemn these people because they were neither mathematicians nor scientists nor philosophers, nor yet students of political economy. At the same period we ourselves were not remarkable for our attainments in these important respects (nor indeed for a very long time afterwards) although we had had for long centuries the benefit of the Roman supervision, with its own Greek contacts to be followed by the onslaught of Christianity. It cannot even be said for us, as it can for Sei Shōnagon and her friends, that we paid any undue devotion to Beauty in any of her shrines. Yet we were able

to make our mark in the world later in more ways than one, and that in spite of our indifference to philosophy.

“ Realms which Cæsar never knew
Our posterity did sway.
Where his eagles never flew——”

And so also with the Japanese. The Heian love of exquisiteness certainly did not sap the national virility, nor was Japan compelled to own her later achievements to the swords of conquering invaders as was England. It was not the Heian period which laid her open to foreign education of that type, and she was strong enough to repel it indignantly and to take what she chose and not what they willed from other nations.

No, we cannot charge either the Heian or Nara periods with national deterioration and weakness, but we can thank them for having created a flame of beauty from which we have lit not a few of our own lamps. Japan has always been a free-trader in ideas both given and received.

Sei Shōnagon is always lovable in the manifestations of her own religion. She may laugh with the other ladies at a poor man whose house had been burnt and amuse herself by tricking him into the belief that a few lines of hers mean a promise of help. Hateful!—as she herself would say in other connections. But when she

looked upon the mountains and valleys of this loveliest of lands, or entered the dim golden temples, or bowed herself over poetry perhaps less beautiful than the symbols which conveyed it, or watched the string of wild geese crying against the rose of a sunset sky, she was Beauty.

There is one remarkable lack in this book, as there is also in the famous *Story of Genji* (ably translated by Mr. Waley), and that is the amazing absence of any sense of humour in life. One supposes they had it—there is certainly plenty in modern Japan—but in these two books I only recall one really humorous situation. It occurs in *The Story of Genji*, when a wife supposed to be an invalid and insane beholds her husband garbed to perfection in the labyrinthine and perfumed garments of the period and on the point of setting out to spend the evening with a rival. She leaps nimbly to her feet, seizes the brazier, and discharges all the ashes and embers over the head of that shining figure. He spends the evening at home. I cannot believe that that lady's insanity was incurable, but the humour depends entirely on the question—Did the authoress enjoy her inspiration? I believe she did not, for she (the Lady Murasaki) is evidently much shocked by such unseemly behaviour.

The nearest we get to this in Sei Shōnagon is the little pettish lady who wishes she had contrived the quarrel with her lover so much

earlier in the night that she could have enjoyed both the quarrel and the warmth under the futons. Sei Shōnagon certainly smiled in depicting that shuddering little figure. There are ironic touches here and there, notably in the section headed "A Picture," but humour requires a sympathy she does not possess.

For quiet humour I should place foremost in Japanese the reflections of Kenkō, scholar, gentleman, and monk in the famous *Tsure-zure-gusa*, a book which I hope will be available before long in this series.

What can be given in these excerpts from Nobuko Kobayashi's work may convince readers that this is so, though I do not deny that the wine of beauty is necessarily spilt in pouring it from the golden cup of its own language into the silver cup of another. Nor do I deny—but rather assent—that the heroine of this book, being a fanatic of beauty, is as cruel and selfish as the fanatics of other religions appear to those who do not know or have sat at the feet of another teacher.

The circumstances of Sei Shōnagon's life may be briefly told:

She belonged to a family of literary taste, connected by kinship with the great Fujiwara clan which for so long dominated the fortunes of Japan. When she came to attend the Empress her age was between twenty-four and thirty.

The Empress—an intelligent girl of fifteen—was then much younger, and it was perhaps because of that fact, and also because of her exalted position (which put her completely out of reach of rivalry, intellectual or otherwise) that something like a friendship seems to have sprung up between her and her very self-absorbed and rather hard-hearted lady-in-waiting. The Empress died about the age of twenty-five, and the Pillow Sketch Book plays like a searchlight only over those ten years. Sei Shōnagon is said to have recorded her impressions at the Empress's request.

It remains to add that the sentences between brackets in this book are always the notes of the translator, and that she herself regrets as I do that more cannot be given of the book. We have endeavoured to give a good deal that has been avoided by other translators, though, naturally, it is impossible to avoid the beaten track altogether. And it has been our aim to give it in Sei Shōnagon's own words and not merely as quotations among our own comments. The effort has been to present the writer and not her commentators. And I think the reader will agree that there is much of the Wisdom of the East in its serpentine form in her work which justifies its inclusion in this series.

L. ADAMS BECK.

BEFORE SHE BECOMES A COURT OFFICIAL

IN spring, at dawn, the dark mass of the mountain lightens little by little at the edge and slowly the blue mists float away. How lovely !

But in summer the night is best. Need I speak of the moon ? And the darkness is made beautiful by the dancing glittering of fire-flies as they flit to and fro. And even if the rain falls in the summer dark it is delicious.

Autumn. In the evening the setting sun is a glory, and when it nears the mountain peak the crows are flying swiftly home in little groups. That too is lovely. But still more beautiful the chain of wild geese in the far sky. And then the sun is gone and the ruffle of the breeze and insistent chirp of the cicadas follow. Delightful !

Now, in winter I choose the very early morning. A snow-storm is a delight beyond words, or a clear, still frost. Without either of these it is still frightfully cold, and everyone is lighting charcoal in the braziers and hurrying with them

all round the Palace. As the sun rises it is warmer, and then there is nothing left in the braziers but white ash.

I think the best months on the whole are really January, February, March, April, May, July, August, and September. But, of course, the whole year has charm. On New Year's Day, with a quiet sky lightly veiled with a spring-like haze, the people are tricked out in their very best and most carefully chosen dresses, and all brimming over with good wishes for the happiness of their masters and their own. It is the gayest sight.

On the 7th January a great fuss is made about gathering the Seven Herbs. Rice-gruel must be eaten then cooked with these seven kinds of herbs, because they are powerful against disease and bad luck. This custom was brought from China about eleven hundred years ago. The noble families come to the palace to see the ceremony of the Grey-Black Horses. That cannot be omitted, because those who see it on the 7th January escape disaster for the whole year. They decorate their ox-carriages lavishly. When they come to the great gate the carriages go bump! at the threshold, and they knock their heads together and combs are broken and they laugh more heartily than ever. Near the Guard House are standing the noble officers who have the right of entry to the Denjo—an imperial palace. They stand there laughing and teasing

the ceremonial Horses with the twanging of a bow which they have taken from a retainer. Many Court-ladies are gliding to and fro. I wondered who the lucky people are who make themselves so at home in the Palace. This courtyard is small, so I could see how carelessly the soldiers had powdered their faces. It looked like the melted snow patching the brown earth. Awfully ugly! The horses began to get restive and frightened me, so I drove on and missed the rest of the ceremony.

15th January. To-day the rice-gruel is offered to their Majesties. All the greatest Court-ladies, young and old, are at their frolics, trying to strike each other with thin rods of elder which have been used in stirring the gruel. They hide these behind their backs (if anyone receives a blow it prophesies a son) and it is very funny to see them dodging the blow. Each one is delighted when she gets a blow in at someone else.

The Court-ladies were peeping out to watch for a bridegroom who has begun to visit his bride since last year. (It was then the custom for the bride to remain awhile in her home.) He was going to the Palace, and they were lying in wait. Unluckily one of them began to laugh, and they were making wild signs to her to control herself, while he marched on unconscious, with an air of the utmost dignity. Then out rushed one of them and gave him a small blow with the

elder rod and bolted. He showed no surprise or anger, smiled amiably, and went on—but he flushed red.

While the ladies are at this game the men sometimes join in. Then someone gets angry and abuses the others. Of course, things are generally as formal as can be at the Palace. It is only on this day that ceremony is sent flying.

But a really very amusing time is when the inaugural ceremony for the newly appointed local prefects is held. In these bitter cold days many of them go about carrying their written applications. It is hopeful enough for those who are gay and young, but what about the old white-haired man who calls in the ladies' room and proudly announces his merits! He never dreams how they laugh at him when he says :

“I entreat you, ladies, to report favourably of me to the Emperor and Empress.”

MARCH

The sun is shining mildly on the 3rd of March, and the little willow leaves are still folded like cocoons. That is really more lovely than when they are fully opened.

I love a great bough of cherry loaded with blossom. It must be cut in long sprays and set in a great jar. To complete the picture there must be a Court-guest or her brother—a splendid

young lord in a white dress of ceremony lined with green or grape-colour. They must be seated near the Empress and talk with the utmost grace and elegance. And I would have birds flying and butterflies fluttering about to set off this picture of peace and beauty.

Oh, the faint far call of the cuckoo in the dusk at the time of the spring festival! People are busy running here and there carrying parcels of double-coloured stuff. It is amusing to see a young woman with her hair magnificently dressed but her dress all anyhow, mending the cords of her shoes for the festival. And the children are simply dancing everywhere, though on the day of the festival they will be roped in and dressed in ceremonial costume. Everybody is in their best according to their degree, and out march all the families in state.

REFLECTIONS

It is really very sad for people who permit their son to become a priest. Naturally, it is a steady-going, reliable kind of profession, especially as it has the merit of promoting relations to heaven, but when all is said and done, what a wooden kind of business! They must live on the simplest fare. Even their sleep is doled out, and they must study intolerably. A young priest, whose desires must be supposed to be alive, must not

even look in the direction where young women are, unless indeed he looks with an air of disgust. And even to that people take great exception.

To be candid, an exorcist has a worse time than even a priest. He has to learn his business in the mountains, amid horrible hardships. And when he has made his reputation, people are always pestering him for his services. Even then it is difficult to be popular. If the patient is seriously ill, that means the demon is a sturdy one to attack. And if the poor exorcist nods off asleep because of exhaustion through this freakish demon, people say:

"Aha!—always nodding!"—much to his shame.

At least it used to be so. Perhaps it is easier nowadays.

SEI SHŌNAGON COMES TO COURT

There were so many things to bewilder me when I first came into attendance at the Palace that I could have burst into tears at any moment. I was free in the daytime, but every night I was in waiting behind the Empress's three-foot screen. She would take out some pictures and show them to me, but still I could not control my shyness; so bad was it that I could not even venture to stretch out my hand for them. She explained them all:

"This picture is so and so. This is another story."

And a bright light was burning so that everything was really more distinctly seen than in daylight—I may say every hair, so that I was dreadfully embarrassed. But I tried to control myself and to look at the pictures. It was very cold, and her hands, which I could see a little when she gave them to me, were of the loveliest faint pink. I who was little accustomed to such beautiful hands was amazed as I watched them and thought, "I could never have believed such people existed on earth!"

At dawn I was hurrying off, but the Empress said :

"Do stay awhile, God of Katsuragi!"

(The God of Katsuragi had such an unfortunate appearance that he only ventures out at night.)

So I retreated to a corner, but did not open the door. A Court-lady came up and said :

"Please open the door!" Another lady went to open it, but the Empress called out :

"Wait awhile, please"—and the lady went away laughing and left it as it was.

The Empress talked with me awhile and questioned me, and then said :

"It is getting late and you want to rest, so you must go now, but come earlier to-night."

I knew none of the customs, so I found it all very difficult.

Outside the snow was piled up—perfectly lovely!—and when I returned to the Presence there was a good fire and, as it seemed purposely, no one near it. The Empress had taken her seat near the brazier, which was of lacquer sprinkled with inlaid gold. Some ladies of very high rank were in waiting, and in the next room near the large fire were so many ladies that it seemed there was no room left—all splendidly dressed and behaving as if they were quite accustomed to splendour. It made me too envious to see them moving so carelessly and gracefully, and even when they offered anything to the Empress, all was done with such perfect ease, talking and laughing gaily. It worried me terribly, and I wondered how long I should take to become accustomed to it all.

Presently loud cries announcing a visit! The Empress's father was expected, and everyone began hurrying to put things in order. I hid myself inside the screen, but as I wanted to see I peeped through a crevice. It was the Empress's brother, the Dainagon, and I noticed how beautifully the purple of his over-dress and trousers were reflected on the snow. He took his seat by the pillar and said:

"For the last few days I have been in retreat for the fast, but the snow has been so heavy that I began to be anxious about you."

She answered, "I certainly didn't expect you. I thought, 'There were no roads left.'"

(She alluded to the poem "To One Who Came To-day":

"In the country village the road is lost in deep snow.
Ah, how one pities the man who comes to-day!")

He laughed, understanding the allusion, and said:

"Well, I really came because I expected to gain your admiration by the adventure."

Their attitudes and manners were delightful. I had never seen anything to compare with them. It was exactly like a scene in one of the celebrated novels set off with the most perfectly chosen words. The Empress was in white with overdresses of crimson damask, and her lovely hair fell over them. I had seen such things in pictures but never in reality, so it seemed as if I were in a dream.

The Lord Dainagon talked to the ladies very merrily, but though they were rather shy they answered him freely, and when he made his jokes they protested. The scene was so dazzling to me that I really blushed at my own clumsiness.

He took some fruit and offered it to the Empress and asked:

"Who is hiding behind the screen?" And when he was told it was I, he left his seat, and instead of going out, as I expected, he came and

sat near me and talked about things he had heard of me before I came to Court, asking :

"Now, was all this true ?"

Even seeing him through the screen confused me, but this was so alarming that I was helpless, as if in a dream. In the Emperor's processions, when the Lord Dainagon had happened to look towards our carriage I had always been careful to close the bamboo blind quite down, and to put up my fan so that even a glimpse of my face should not be seen. And now, though I had longed to be in attendance at Court, I asked myself why on earth I had undertaken it if I were to feel as terrified as this ! I was in a cold perspiration—so how could I answer him ?—and he quietly possessed himself of my fan, the only shelter for my confusion ! I instantly imagined my hair was all out of order, and I thought I must look as impossible as I felt. I longed for his going, but he was playing with my fan.

"Who painted it ?" he asked, with evidently no idea of leaving.

I bent my head down and hid my face with my sleeve at the risk of brushing off my powder and appearing with a spotted face. I think the Empress guessed my misery at last, for she called to him :

"Do come here and look at this. I wonder who wrote it ?"

I was enchanted, but he said :

"Please send it here. I'll look at it."

But still the Empress called him, and he said gaily :

"But the Lady Shōnagon won't let me go !"

He was as merry as a boy, but of course it was very awkward in view of the difference in our ages and positions. Looking at the book, which was in ordinary writing, he said :

"I wonder whose ? Well, you have only to show it to this lady. *She* would recognise the writing of any of the well-known people in the world !"

And all the time in this way his effort was to get me to say something.

Even with only one person I was in the utmost confusion, and now, after another announcement, someone else came up. He also wore a fine over-dress, and his jokes were gayer than the Lord Dainagon's. So the ladies were immensely fluttered, and chattering like this :

"Oh, yes, yes ! And I saw that So-and-so did such a thing. And the others too——" and so forth, as they talked about the officers.

The officers ! I wondered. I thought of them as superior beings or angels descending to earth ! But yet, as the days went by and I became accustomed to all this, I saw it was nothing to wonder at. I suppose everyone took it as I did at first and got used to it exactly in the same way.

The Empress said to me :

"Tell me the truth—do you really like me ?"

I answered in a hurry :

"How could I do otherwise——" And, just as I began, immediately from the place for arranging our food someone sneezed uproariously. The Empress said at once :

"Now that shows you are certainly not telling the truth. Well—you must do as you please !" And she went into the inner room.

Now why should she say that ? For I think my liking for her is stronger than usual. I think it was that unfortunate sneezing nose which was talking falsely ! Whoever sneezed it was horrid. I hate to sneeze myself, and always choke it down when I can, and to think anyone should have done it at such a crucial moment ! Hateful ! Still, as a newcomer I could say nothing to the Empress, and when the dawn came I went off to my room. Presently a letter was brought me written on fine light green paper and very elegantly. I opened it at once.

"How could I have known the false from the true,
Had not the Voice of Corroboration
Rung from the heavens ?"

This was sent from the Empress through one of her ladies. I was confused between admiration of the poem and regret about the whole affair. I wished I could track down the sneezer !

(She wrote in answer, giving it to the waiting lady.)

"If I were shallow-hearted so it might be.
Sad to be condemned only by a sneeze to misfortune!"

"I entreat you to correct this and to convey it to the Presence. It would be terrible to incur the curse of the God of Shiki."

(The malediction of this god is used by exorcists in the healing services.)

So I sent this answer and ever afterwards fretted over the business. And why it must just happen at that moment I really cannot imagine.

(A sneeze is unlucky in more countries than Japan.)

A FAMOUS SCENE

One day in the midst of a great snow-storm the blinds were lowered as usual and we were assembled in the Presence talking round a good fire. The Empress said suddenly:

"Shōnagon, I wonder how the snow looks on Koraho?"

I opened the blind and rolled it up high. The Empress laughed with pleasure. Later everybody heard of this, and they used to repeat it and make poems about it, though they had not

made much of it at first. However, everyone said :

"The lady who serves *this* Empress should certainly have her wits about her !"

(The Empress's allusion was to a Chinese mountain immortalised in a poem by the famous poet Li Po, known in Japan as Hakurakutan. A part is as follows :

"Leaving my pillow I hear the bell of Iaidera,
Raising the bamboo blind I see the snow on Koraho."

The literary elegance with which the Empress made her allusion to Li Po, and thus expressed her wish to have the blind raised, and Shōnagon's equally intelligent response have made this incident the most famous of her life. All over Japan one sees her raising that immortal bamboo blind in pictures, lacquers, damascenes, and what not.)

THE EMPRESS'S FATHER PAYS A VISIT

The Empress's father arrived wearing full trousers of grey-blue with a cherry-coloured overdress and three crimson dresses beneath. Beginning with the Empress, everyone wore the loveliest things—brocades of dark or light red plum-colour, the stuffs patterned and embossed

so that they caught the light. He came into the Presence and spoke with the Empress. Her manner in answering her father was lovely. I wished that everyone in the Empire could have seen it—even that one glimpse! He looked at us and said to her:

"I think your Majesty has no cause for discontent. I really envy you in having all these beautiful ladies to attend you. Something to look at! Not a low-born person—all of them well born and bred! Delightful! You should train them to serve you faithfully and repay them with kindness. But what I really wonder is how they could know anything of your Majesty and want to serve you! Oh, such a miserly lady! I have been serving her with all my heart's love ever since she was born, and she has never so much as given me a dress! You may believe me, ladies, for I never talk scandal?"

He was so amusing that none of us could help laughing. He went on:

"All the same it's true? Are you laughing at me for being so foolish about her? Oh, she's shameful!"

While he was joking like this the Emperor's messengers came. The Empress's brother presented the letter to his father. He unknotted the tie and said:

"A most elegant letter! If you permit me I will read it."

But soon after, as if noticing he had been talking rather freely, he offered it to the Empress, saying :

"It is too gracious for my deserts."

She took it but delayed to open it. The grace of her attitude was exquisite. One of the ladies brought a cushion for the messenger and entertained him politely. Three or four ladies were attending by the silk screen.

"I will go and prepare my gifts," said her father, and the Empress opened the letter and wrote an answer on plum-coloured paper exactly the same colour as her dress. No one who has not seen her can imagine how beautiful she was. They have had a loss indeed.

By her father's order the day was a special holiday, and gifts were given by him in which a costume of plum-colour was included. There were refreshments, and we tried to persuade him to drink, but he refused and said to the Prince his son :

"To-day is a special day ; therefore please excuse me, my lord," and so retired.

His daughters the princesses were exquisitely made up and dressed in plum-colour. His wife also appeared in the Presence, but the screen shaded her so that it was difficult to see her, which was disappointing.

All the ladies were assembled and excitedly discussing the question of costumes or fans for

the day, some of them rather angrily, and then one began to grumble and said :

"For my part I shall not bother. I shall go just as I am."

And immediately everybody turned upon her.

"Such a woman ! Did you ever hear such a thing ? "

In the evening many of them went home to get ready, and the Empress would not hinder them. Her father's wife called upon her and messengers were sent. The cherry-blossoms had not had time to blossom into beauty before the sun faded them, so that they were rather a draggled sight, especially as it had rained at night. On the next morning there was little to be seen. When I got up I said :

"A sadder sight than the face that has wept
At dawn for the parting."

The Empress heard of the fiasco and said :

"How it must have rained last night ! I wonder if the cherry-blossoms are ruined ? "

In the meantime her father had sent his retainers to gather them all.

"We were to come in very quietly in the dark and get them away, but now it is light. A nuisance !—so we must be quick. Hurry ! Hurry ! "

They were saying this and doing it with

lightning speed. If they had been educated people I should have said to them :

"Do you remember Kanezumi's poem saying, 'He would answer if he were challenged.' " But they were quite below that sort of thing, so I said instead :

"Who are you people stealing the flowers ? You will get into trouble."

They laughed and went on, leaving when they had finished. However, the idea was excellent, for if they had done nothing it would have been a case of bare twigs and that would have been appalling.

Said the Empress :

"What a disappointment ! In the dawn I heard some chatter about stealing the flowers, but I thought only some branches were stolen. Who did it ? Did you see ? "

"No. It was quite dark, so that I couldn't distinguish them. I only saw some white figures."

The Empress said, laughing :

"No one would strip the branches like that. I believe my father set them to work and hid himself."

"I don't think so. What about the spring wind ? " I asked.

"You are keeping a secret. They haven't been stolen. They were ruined by the rain," said she,

It was not surprising, coming from her, for she is so clever, but it was decidedly quick.

A PICTURE OF PALACE LIFE

On the sliding doors of the Northern partition is the picture of a tossing sea and monsters with terrible long legs and arms. While we were laughing and pretending to be afraid to look at such horrors, they placed near the railing a huge vase and filled it with boughs of cherry in full blossom—fully five feet long, so that the flowers covered it gloriously. At noon-time the Empress's elder brother came in, walking with perfect grace. He was dressed in a cherry-coloured cloak just old enough to have lost its stiffness, dark violet full trousers, with white robes and a brilliantly coloured damask robe showing a little. The Emperor was inside, so he sat down on the floor at the entrance to talk with his Majesty. Inside the bamboo blinds were all the ladies, beautifully dressed in lovely different colours in perfect taste—cherry-colour, mauve and yellow—and all these showed through the bamboo blinds as they sat side by side.

Towards the day-palace came the footsteps of the men who announce the Emperor's lunch, and the cry of "Oshi! Oshi!" reached the ears. It was the serenest, sunniest spring day, and everything was looking its best. When

the last dishes were carried in, the Chamberlain came to report to the Emperor that lunch was ready. The Emperor went through the central door; his brother-in-law followed him, but soon afterwards he returned and sat in front of the cherry-blossoms as before.

The screen was moved and the Empress came out to see her brother. It was such a pretty picture that even the lookers-on were happily absorbed in watching it. He began to recite the old poem with much charm :

"Days and months change and vanish,
But the palace of the mountain of Minuro abides for ever."

A lovely sight—the grace of the Empress. Ah, that it could have lasted a thousand years as this ancient poem has done !

The people who wait at his Majesty's lunch were calling for someone, and presently the Emperor returned to this palace. His Majesty told me to prepare the ink in the ink-dish. While I was rubbing it I was looking up at him and wishing this also could last for ever.

He took out a piece of white paper and doubled it, saying :

"I want each one of you to write down some poem from memory."

I said to the Empress's brother :

"What on earth am I to do ?"

"Write something and offer it at once. Men

need not do anything, for his Majesty's command is only for you ladies." And he drew up the ink-dish. "Hurry—hurry! Don't wait to think. Write what you remember, even if it's only the ABC!"—so he went on urging us.

I cannot think why I was so frightened. I flushed scarlet and my brain swam. The others wrote two or three things about spring or the hearts of flowers and passed them on to me, saying:

"Your turn now!"

I wrote the poem—

"As the years pass
Age overtakes me.
But in gazing at the flowers
How should I grieve?"

I wrote this, as I say, but I changed the line "But in gazing at the flowers" to "gazing at my Sovereign Lord," and when the Emperor looked at this he said:

"A lovely greeting! I wanted a chance of hearing your quick wit."

And on this he told us a story of the Emperor Enyuin. He told his Court notabilities each to write a poem in a certain book. Some of them were rather staggered and begged to be let off, but he said:

"Don't trouble about your writing, and if the poem doesn't exactly hit off the season it doesn't matter a snap to me!"

So according to these commands the perplexed notabilities made a start. Among them was Lord Michitaka, the Empress's father. He wrote :

" As the tide rises
On the shore of Izumo¹
Always and always
I love you more deeply."

But he changed the last line from "I love you more deeply" to

" Grows my devotion
To him—my Emperor"—

and the Emperor was perfectly delighted.

As the Emperor told us this I was ashamed of myself and absolutely fell into a cold perspiration. I wonder if most young people would find a poem hard to write if they knew such things.

But to-day even those who could write well were frozen into formality and made a mess of it.

Later, the Empress put the ancient *Kōkinshū*, the anthology of poems, before her and began to read the first part of a poem. Then she said to us :

" And now what comes next ? "

Amazing to tell, not one of us could give it, though some of us knew it as well as our own names. Saishō remembered about ten, but that was nothing, and it was still worse for those

¹ A word similar to "Izumo" means "always."

who remembered only five or six. It would have been easier to say, "Clean gone!" but we were all as sorry as could be, and whispered:

"How on earth can we all say we remember nothing? It will spoil the Empress's pleasure." Ridiculous!

When she went on to read the ends of the poems we had forgotten, we all said, sighing:

"Why, of course, we remember them perfectly now. What in the world has happened to all our memories?"

And then the Empress said:

"Really and truly, those of you who are interested in this anthology ought to remember every word of it. In the time of the Emperor Murakami lived the Princess of Sennyu-den. She was the daughter of the Minister of the Left, so everybody knew about her. When she was very young her father said to her:

"First perfect yourself in writing. Then excel all others in playing the *kōtō*. Then faithfully study and learn by heart all the poems in the *Kōkinshu* collection."

"One day the Emperor remembered he had heard some rumour of this, and on one of his fast days he came to see her at Sennyu-den with the *Kōkinshu* hidden behind him. He drew up the screen to seclude her, which was very surprising, and while she sat astonished he opened the book and began to examine her,

“ ‘Now what is this poem ? Who wrote it ? When did he write it ? In what month of what year ? ’

“ She instantly understood his object, but she must have been terribly anxious lest she should be shamed by remembering wrongly or entirely forgetting the context. The Emperor called two or three ladies who knew the poems, and appointed them to tell off her mistakes with chequer stones. He himself was in great excitement. A merry, happy scene ! It makes one envious.

“ On he went, and not one mistake did she make !— though as modest as possible. He meant to stop as soon as he caught her out in the tiniest fault or even hesitation, for he was really a little jealous of this wonderful memory. And so they went through ten volumes.

“ ‘ Well, we can’t do any more now,’ said the Emperor, and he slipped in the book-marker and went off to bed.

“ Really a perfect triumph for her !

“ After a little while he woke up, thinking, ‘ I should have finished those questions. What if she is looking the poems up now ? I see I must go through the other ten volumes to-night.’

“ He drew the light nearer and went at it until the small hours, and still the Princess remained unconquerable.

“ People ran to her father’s house soon after the

Emperor came to the Palace and reported what was going on. Her father threw himself into a perfect storm of agitation, engaged I don't know how many priests to recite scriptures for her success, and he himself was on his knees for hours and hours praying. It is really rather pathetic that he longed for it so passionately, is it not ? ”

Thus the Empress finished her story, and the Emperor was immensely interested and lost in admiration of the Princess's wonderful memory, saying :

“ But I wonder how the Emperor Murakami could read through twenty volumes. I myself should be pulled up by three or four.”

“ Ah,” said someone, “ in the olden times even the low-class people had refined tastes. Anything of that sort is very rare now.”

Every one of us in the Presence and also the Emperor's ladies were chattering to each other with such enjoyment. It was a most delightful and harmonious evening.

MEN CANNOT STAND CHAFFING

The Princess of Kōkiden is the daughter of the General of the Left, and the Lady Sakyo one of her ladies. Minamoto, the Lieutenant-General, was in love with her, and of course all the ladies relished discussing the situation. Once, when

they were deep in it, he came to the Empress's palace and said :

"Of course, I really should have liked immensely to be put on night duty *here* ! I know you ladies have been hard upon me because I have seemed neglectful. But if I had been on night duty nothing could have equalled my zeal !"

All of them said "Indeed !" So I put in my word.

"It really is very comfortable to have duty where one can have an easy time and sleep. Naturally, one is zealous in looking after duty of that kind. We can hardly expect you to come here where there is no other attraction."

He was furious at once.

"I have done with you !" he said energetically. "I thought you were a friend of mine, so I opened my mind to you, but now you are simply retailing old scandals."

I nudged the lady next me and said seriously :

"How very strange ! Now, what can I possibly have said to hurt your feelings so cruelly ?"

She, understanding at once, took up the tale, laughing gaily :

"Really, there was nothing in what Lady Shōnagon said to provoke anyone. There must be something behind all this."

"As to that, I think Lady Shōnagon has done *her* share," he said in a high state of resentment.

"I ? I wouldn't hurt anyone's feelings for

all the world. I detest people who do that kind of thing ! " I said. And off we all trooped behind the bamboo screens.

Even after several days he was furious.

" You spoke as if I had something to be ashamed of," he said, " and I tell you the honest truth. There wasn't a word of truth in that affair. Somebody got up the rumour to turn me into ridicule with the officers."

" Then why, may I ask, did you visit it all on me ? " I replied. " Surely that was very odd ? "

But the amusing thing was that he immediately wound up the affair with poor Sakyo once and for all !

THE RITES OF THE MOUNTAIN OF MITAKE

A young man of good birth who has been making a retreat for the fast at the mountain of Mitake is rather a lamentable person. When he has to worship in the dawn he is obliged to live separately from his family. I wonder if his sweetheart ever steals out into the dawn to hear his voice ! But it is a very auspicious affair when his family's anxiety about it is safely over and he comes back, a little shabby and with a tattered hat, but triumphant.

Of course, I have always read that even a person of very high rank dresses in a very simple

way for the Mitake rites, but Lord Nobutaka thought differently. He said:

"It is really very silly that one should look like nothing at all. What is going to happen because one is dressed decently? The divine Spirit of Mitake has certainly never announced, 'You must look like a scarecrow when you come up to worship!'"

So, on the last of March he arrayed himself in full trousers of dark deep purple, a white cloak, and a dress green outside and lined with yellow—a perfect glare of gaiety! And his son kept him company in a green outer dress, a crimson dress, and a long skirt covered with startling patterns. They set off together to worship, and on the way up all the pilgrims ascending and descending stood to stare, for never before had two such figures been beheld on this mountain.

Nobutaka came back on the last day of April, and on or about the tenth he succeeded to the post of Chikuzen no Kami, who died most appropriately! People gossiped about it, saying that his words had proved true. (For the God of Mitake had certainly not resented his fopperies.)

A PICTURE

In July it is so hot that every door and window is left wide open. It is delightful to look out into the moonlight from one's bed. The darkness too

has enchantment, and the faint moon at dawn is exquisite.

On the edge of one beautiful polished veranda a fine new mat is carelessly laid and the three-foot screen placed behind it, uselessly, for it should be set in front. It looks as if there might be something interesting behind it. I wonder! I think she has just been left alone. She is lying down in a dress sheening into dark violet; the right side has faded a little or it may perhaps be a very glossy damask. Her clove-coloured under-dress and the cords of her scarlet silk skirt show from beneath as though they had been left untied, and by her side her beautiful hair is smoothed out as if to show its length.

While the air is full of morning mist someone comes in. I wonder from where? He wears full trousers of wistaria colour and a very glossy crimson silk cloak which appears damp with mist. His hair is ruffled as if he had pushed it carelessly into his cap and he has an unfinished appearance. He is hurrying back somewhere and humming—

Go no Shitakusa:

“Dew lies thick
On the grass of Sakurao.
Were it not better to linger
Even if parents should guess?”

He was hurrying to send a morning letter to his lady-love while the dew still starred the morning

glories. But when he came to this open door he happened to look in as he rolled up a little bit of the bamboo blind. The thought occurred to him that this solitary one may have the same idea about the morning dew.

He watches awhile. Near her pillow lies a fan of purple paper with wooden ribs, and near the screen sheets of narrow paper which might be crimson or scarlet are scattered about—some of them faded. She has an instinct that someone has come in and peeps through the folds of her dress. There he is, smiling at her and standing against the sliding panel. She is not shy, but her heart is already occupied, and perhaps she regrets that she has let him see her in disarray.

"You are having a long morning sleep after someone's departure?" he says, edging inside the bamboo blind.

"And you are irritable because you left her before the dew was dry," she retorts.

Perhaps there is not much here to write about, but their attitudes in talking to each other are rather charming. He bends towards her to take the fan which lies near her pillow. Her heart beats faster as he comes so near, and she draws back a little. He takes her fan and looks at it and says—

"But how cold you are to me!"—with a touch of resentment.

However, it is getting lighter and lighter, and

people begin to chatter as they do at sunrise. The letter which was to be sent in such a hurry before the dawn-mist lifted must now be delayed, may even be influenced by a third person !

I wonder if when this lover sent his letter, tied with a dewy spray of the hagi-flower, whether his messenger hesitated to present it to the lady because she also had a guest ? In any case the delicious scent of the incense with which it was perfumed would be interesting !

He left then, for it was growing so light as to be embarrassing. It would be humorous if he happened to imagine that the room he had forsaken in the dawn was in the same plight as this !

PALACE LIFE

One of the ladies' rooms in the corridor is very intriguing. The upper door is wide open and the breeze is very cool in summer and snow- and sleet-laden in the winter. The room is quite small and not very convenient when the little maids hide behind the screen. Still, they are not as noisy as elsewhere, and it is rather nice to hear them. In the daytime one must be careful and at night still more so.

The sound of people going to and from the Palace lasts all night long. Suddenly someone stops at the door, and he knocks stealthily—

with one finger. Ah, the moment when she knows it is he! He has been knocking quite a long time and not a sound does she make, but she does not want him to think she is sound asleep, so she makes a tiny rustle with her silk dress to tell him she is awake. Listening, she can hear that he is quietly using his fan.

In the winter he can hear the tongs softly building up the charcoal in the brazier, so he knocks more loudly and she glides to the door and listens to hear what he is at.

Many people pass, reciting poems or singing. She opens the door before they knock, or they would stop even if they had not intended to call upon her. And as they often stay all night in the garden, owing to the small size of the room, it is very amusing.

The fine new green bamboo blind is very beautiful, and underneath the screen you may see the hems of lovely summer garments of linen and the edges of charming dresses—the young nobles who wear a robe always red at the back, and the sixth-grade men who wear the blue dress. All behave politely, keeping away from the door, standing with their backs to the wall and sleeves folded over their hands. It is really enchanting.

The music practice for the festival of Kamo is most amusing. The officers pass with long torches, and they draw their heads into their collars so that the effect is that of the torches passing on their

own. When the music begins they go by our room, singing and playing the flute. The young nobles in their ceremonial dress come there and stop for a gossip.

When the night is advanced we wait to see the dancers and musicians coming back. The song of "The New Rice Plants," sung by the young nobles, is enchanting. If any long-face passes us by quickly and without a glance, everyone laughs at him, and one of us says:

"Oh, but *do* wait a little while! Why are you in such a hurry to leave before dawn? Do—do stay!"

But he scurries off—I wonder if he is frightened?—exactly as if we were after him.

Once the Empress stayed at the Shikinomizoshi Palace. It is hidden in tall darkening trees and is very lonely and secluded, and in that way interesting enough. It was said that there were ghosts in the main building, so we shut the sliding doors and put the screen in the south room for the Empress, and we had the next room.

In the morning mists we walked in the garden, and that waked the Empress. We were amusing ourselves there and the dawn came slowly. I declared I would go to the Saemon Guard-room, and they all trooped after me. Many of the officers were chanting "*Nanigashi Hitokoe no aki.*" We thought they were coming to us, so we ran

inside to talk to them. Some of them said, "Moon viewing, I suppose?" and one gave vent to a short poem.

During the day and night the officers were always coming through, and even when they had no particular business always came to see us.

MUSIC

Next day, the screen with the picture of hell on it was brought to the Emperor that the Empress might see it. An absolutely terrifying and revolting picture. She said to me:

"Do come and look at it." But I answered:

"Excuse me—never! Never in this world will I look at such a thing." And I fled to our room in horror.

That day it poured with rain, so the officers were invited and there was music to relieve the Emperor's boredom. One played the biwa beautifully, another the kōtō, and two flutes were splendid. They played awhile, and when the biwa stopped the Lord Dainagon began to sing—

"The sound of the biwa has ceased and now it is late to talk——"

when out came a woman who had hidden herself to listen, which created a storm of laughter, and someone said:

"It deserves a stiff retribution! Still, who can wonder at anyone wanting to hear such delicious music!"

IDLE TALK

The General of the Guard, To no Chujyo, heard some idle talk about me and abused me so heartily as to say:

"Upon my word I can scarcely consider her a human being!"

And I heard that he said the same sort of thing in the Palace. It makes me very uncomfortable. If it were true of me it would be shameful, but as it is not true he will find out the facts and set it right, so I can smile at it. But when he comes near our door, if he hears my voice he goes straight on and even covers his face with his sleeve that he may not see me. Such is his hatred for me, though I have never attempted an explanation and certainly never look at him.

About the end of February—a very lonely and tedious time, for it was raining hard—I was told he was in attendance on the Emperor and had been observing fast days lately, and that he had said:

"Things have never been the same since I broke it off with her. Should I send a word, I wonder——!"

I simply said I could scarcely believe he was as

weak as that. However, I remained in our room all day, and when I went to the Empress it was after she had gone to bed. The ladies who were on duty were in the next room, playing the game which consists in hiding half the Chinese signs (ideographs) and guessing the whole. They welcomed me, saying :

"Do come along and play. How lovely that you are here !"

But I was out of spirits, for the Empress had retired, and I was wondering why I had come, and so I sat by the brazier, and all of them surrounded me. While we were talking I heard a clear voice outside :

"I am So-and-so. Please announce me to the Lady Sei Shōnagon." Now what could have happened in the short time since I had left the other room ? I sent someone to find out.

"I am a messenger, and I wish to see her myself. It is personal business," he said. Naturally, I went to meet him.

"This letter is from Lord To no Chujyo to you, and he is anxious to have an answer as soon as possible," he said.

As for me, I was wondering what sort of letter it might be in view of his hatred of me. It seemed unwise to read it there and then, so I said to the messenger :

"Thank you. You need not wait. I will send an answer by and by." And I hid it in

my bosom and went back to the room and the chatter. Presently he came again and said :

" If you have decided to send no answer, my master says will you please return his letter. Please decide quickly."

Astonishing ! Feeling decided curiosity, I opened it. It was beautifully written on fine blue paper, but really nothing to make a fuss about. (It was simply the beginning of a verse by Li Po, the famous Chinese poet, to the effect that his friends are prospering in the Imperial service in the shadow of the Emperor's glorious brocade screen, while his own hard fate keeps him in the little straw hut of a hermit at the foot of Mount Rozan. The truth was that he was on duty that fast day, and people had kept coming, and Sei Shōnagon had been discussed, and he sent the beginning of the poem to test her literary knowledge and to elicit an invitation to visit the lonely lady.)

" What is the end ? Please, please tell me ! " he had written below the beginning of the poem.

I was puzzled for a moment and would have consulted the Empress if she had been there. It is not pleasant to attack such difficult Chinese characters unless you really remember them thoroughly, and the messenger was fussing all the time. So I picked up a bit of charcoal and wrote on the empty space in his letter a finish to the verse in my own words :

"Who will visit the lonely hermitage of the straw hut?"

No answer that evening from him! But next day when I went to our room very early there was another of the men—very eager:

"Where is the little straw hut? Where?"

I answered smartly:

"No such miserable place exists. If you ask where is the lotus that holds the Jewel, *then* I will answer you."

"Oh, I am awfully glad to meet you here," he said. "I was going up to the Empress's palace. The truth is that last night at To no Chujyo's room people almost all above the sixth grade were discussing all sorts of personal things and recalling old days and so on, and he said, speaking of you: 'Since I have broken with her I am absolutely at a loose end, and of course I thought she would begin to discuss it, but she has been absolutely indifferent and I am as angry as can be. To-night I will find out once for all how we stand.' So we consulted and sent you that letter, and the messenger came and reported that you had marched back into the room, saying, 'I shall not trouble about this yet.' So To no Chujyo sent him straight back, saying, 'Hang on to her sleeve and make her answer, and if she won't, bring back my letter.' So off went the messenger again in the pelting rain and was back in no time, saying, 'Here it is,' and offering the letter. It was To

no Chujyo's own, and he said disgustedly: 'She has sent it back!' and then he opened it and cried out, 'Alas!' and everybody said in amazement, 'What on earth has happened?' and crowded up to see. He said, 'She is as clever as—— No, no, I can never do without her!' and I can tell you we were all wild with admiration at the way you took it up, and everybody said, 'We must compose a beginning' to the tag-end of a poem which you had given him. We struggled at it until horribly late and then gave up in despair. However, one conclusion we did come to, and that was that such a *jeu d'esprit* must be given to the world."

All this in such ecstasies of admiration that I was quite abashed! He added:

"And now we have nicknamed you 'The Straw Hut'!" and off he dashed in a hurry.

But I said to myself, "Rather a miserable sort of nickname! I must get rid of it in future."

Up came another of the men.

"Congratulations! Congratulations! I have just been up to the Empress's palace and——"

"And have you got a fine new appointment? What is it?" I asked.

"Oh, an enchanting affair! It happened last night, and I longed for dawn that I might come and tell you! Such admiration! Such honour and glory!" he said. And out came all the story I had already heard from the first. He added:

"And To no Chujyo had said, 'It shall be according to her answer. Not another thought shall I give her!' It worked up the situation really tremendously that at first the messenger brought no answer. And when it came I was in a tremble lest it should be poor stuff—a friend feels that kind of thing, you know. But such a success! They said, 'Hallo, you are the lady's friend! Have a look!' I was radiant, but said simply, 'Not a bit in my line! I should never understand the stuff.' But they would have it! They said, 'No, we don't want you to criticise. We only want you to tell everyone about it.' That was a snub for me in a way, but still I was content. And they talked till late trying to compose a beginning to your end. Don't you think it was a glorious set-out for you and me? A new appointment would be nothing to it!"

Really, I was rather sorry I had not known all these people were troubling their heads about me. I was utterly amazed. And while we were talking the Empress sent for me and *she* repeated the whole affair, finishing up with:

"The Emperor was here this morning and told me that everyone of the officers has written the poem on his fan."

I wonder which and who? I was a little sorry about that. But since this event To no Chujyo has taken down his "sleeve screen" and seems to have conquered his dislike.

On the 25th February the Empress moved again to Shikinomizoshi. I was not in attendance and stayed at the Palace of the Plum Trees. The very next day I had a letter from To no Chujyo :

"Last night I went to worship at Kurama and meant to get back to-night. But I have been told to-day (by the astrologers) that it is an unlucky direction, so I must take another and will get back at dawn. Now, I have important business to discuss with you, so mind you wait for me, and *don't let me have to knock too loud.*"

But as it happened the Empress's sister called me to say :

"Don't sleep alone at the Plum Tree Palace. I want you to come and sleep at mine."

Off I went to the Princess's palace.

Next morning my maid, who was left behind, said to me :

"Last night someone kept knocking and knocking. At last, when I was wide awake, he said, 'I wish you would tell your mistress!' so I just said, 'No, I am afraid she would never wake up,' and I stuck to that and went to sleep again."

While I was reflecting that this was a little hard upon him, his messenger arrived again :

"My Lord To no Chujyo's message, 'I am just leaving the Palace, and there is something I want to say.'"

"And I have business at the Palace and am just going up. So I will see him there," I said.

For I was really afraid he might open our bamboo blind if left to himself, so it seemed best to appoint a meeting, and when I reached the Plum Tree Palace I opened the east blind and said :

"Please come here."

Then he came forward magnificently. He wore a beautiful cherry-coloured cloak lined with the most exquisite refinement of colour. His full trousers were of dark grape-colour patterned with enormous branches of wistaria and a bright red under-dress was showing, and dress under dress, each lighter in colour than the other and as charming as could be. He was sitting on the veranda, which is very narrow, so that from the waist up he leaned close to the bamboo blind and I thought he looked exactly like the very irresistible hero of a novel. The plum-blossoms in the Eastern Garden are pink and in the Western white. They are beginning to fall a little but are still lovely, and in the tranquil sunlight the picture was perfect. But how much prettier if at the bamboo blind there had been a lovely girl with a satin sweep of long black hair falling to her feet, while she said the most charming nothings! That would be really interesting. But with me, no longer in my first youth and with (I own) a supply of artificial hair, frizzed here and there,

and in a dark-coloured dress, for the mornings have been so dull lately that no one can see what one wears, and one does not trouble to diversify the under-dress—what a falling off! Moreover, the Empress was away, and so there was I, and nothing could have been more ordinary. Indeed, I was frightfully sorry to spoil such a scene of romance!

"I am going after the Empress. Can I do anything for you?" he asked, and told me that he came to see me last night, as he thought I would be waiting for him, and at last out came the maid, dazed with sleep and extremely rude. He laughed and said:

"Bad luck for me! Why on earth do you keep a woman like that!"

I quite understood his feelings and was very sorry, but it had its amusing side too. After awhile he went off. But if anyone had beheld this scene from outside they would certainly have imagined a fairy princess sitting behind the bamboo blind, and equally anyone who saw me from the inside could never have guessed what a handsome hero was outside.

THE IMPERIAL CAT

The cat which dwells in the Presence was lately ennobled and therefore respectfully addressed by all as Myobu-no-Omoto. She is the loveliest

creature, and their Majesties adored her. One day she lay on the very edge of the veranda, and her lady-attendant said in alarm :

"Pray pardon me, madam, but do move further in !"

Not the least notice did she take and went placidly off to sleep, drowsing in the sun. At last her lady threatened her, though of course only in jest, saying :

"Where is the dog ? Okinamaru, the Imperial Cat won't listen ! Come and bite her."

Unluckily Okinamaru thought he was wanted in earnest, and he sprang at the exalted cat and she made a dash for it behind the bamboo screen where the Emperor was breakfasting. In horror he caught her to his breast and called aloud. Kuroda Tadataka rushed into the Presence.

"Exile this dog to Dog's Island this instant."

The Imperial command was given. Men assembled and made a great shouting and Okinamaru was driven away. Next came the lady's turn.

"This attendant can in no way be trusted. All must be changed."

She was imprisoned in her room. Okinamaru was exiled.

It was hard enough ! He had been such a happy dog. Only on the 3rd March Lord Yukinari had adorned Okinamaru with willow wreaths, peach-blossoms on his head, and masses

of cherry-bloom on his back and let him trot about in the Imperial garden. Little could we think what sad fortune lay in wait for him ! We were really grieved. Generally he was present at the Empress's dinner, and we missed him very much.

Three or four days passed. At noon we heard a dog's shrieks. Someone came running and crying out :

"Pitiful ! Two of the Kurodo are beating a dog. He will be killed. It is because he has come back."

Directly I heard this I thought it must be Okinamaru, and I sent at once to order them to stop, but the messenger came back and said :

"He is dead. They have thrown his body away over the gate."

We were grieved indeed. That very evening a shabby miserable dog came trembling in. Everybody disputed as to whether it could be Okinamaru or no, but he did not seem to understand when we called him Okinamaru.

The Empress said :

"Call Ukon instantly. She knows him."

Ukon thought it could not be he.

"If his name were called he would always come."

The Empress wept. Until dark we tried to make him eat, but he refused, so we thought it could not possibly be Okinamaru.

Next morning while the Empress was combing her hair and I held the mirror, again I saw the same dog lying under a tree, and I said to myself :

"I am full of sorrow for Okinamaru's death. I wonder where his next rebirth will be."

And as I thought this the dog began to tremble and tears fell from his eyes. And it was Okinamaru ! He had come back secretly yesterday, most miserable at his Majesty's anger. He looked so pitiful—so pathetic—that there is nothing I can compare him with. I threw down the mirror and cried aloud :

"Dear—dear Okinamaru !"

And the poor thing flattened himself out and wept. The Court-ladies ran in, and Ukon came, and we were all happy. Word was sent to the Emperor, and he came and enjoyed the scene. He said :

"A dog has a most beautiful nature."

And the Emperor's ladies called his name softly.

Then he began to move, but his poor face was still swollen. The Empress laughed for joy and said :

"So we have found him at last."

Kuroda Tadataka threatened him and me, but soon after the Emperor formally forgave Okinamaru, and once more he was permitted to live in the Palace. Even now I weep when I remember his touching ways and little gestures.

A CHARMING PRESENT

A messenger came from Tonoben and brought something which looked like a picture wrapped in white paper and tied with a spray of exquisite plum-blossom. I received it, expecting it to be a picture. It was Heidan cakes—two of them—and a letter written in the fashion of a public document, saying :

“Presentation. A parcel of Heidan. Presented as a tribute to the Lady Sei Shōnagon.”

It was dated and signed with Yukinari's name written backward. And inside was this :

“Your humble servant had hoped to bring this, but he is really too ugly to go out in daylight.”

It was all so well done that I went straight off and showed it to the Empress.

“Splendidly written and an excellent idea !” she said, and took possession of it. But I reflected :

“Now what shall I do about an answer ? And ought one to tip the messenger who brought the cakes ? I wish I could find someone who knows the routine in such cases.”

"Do call Korenaka and ask him. I hear his voice," said the Empress. So I went out on the veranda and bid one of the servants call him.

He came in the politest way.

"Forgive me. It is not the Empress's service but a trifling matter of my own," I said. "Please tell me, if anyone sends cake or things like that to any official lady about the Court, must the messenger be tipped?"

"No, no. No such custom. Accept it and eat it as soon as you please."

I wrote an answer on bright red paper, just as follows: "The humble servant who does not bring the gift himself is surely cold-hearted." (The word used for cold-hearted resembles the name of the cake, so this was a delightful pun in the highest fashion.) And I sent it with a beautiful bough of red plum-blossom. Soon afterwards he arrived with the announcement:

"A humble servant to wait upon you!"—

I went out to see him, and he said:

"I was sure you would answer with a short poem, but how clever! An affected woman would put on poetic airs, but I should be more at my ease with one who doesn't. All the same, it is rather a waste of energy to send poems to a man like me."

(The last sentence of his message was the point, which of course Sei Shōnagon grasped at once. The God of Katsuragi is the God of Katsuragi

Mountain. A priest who had been playing hermit in the mountain for thirty years said to him :

"How I wish you would make a bridge on that lamentable road from Katsuragi to Kinposon !"

The God condescended to do this, but the work was very slow and the priest irritable. One day he asked angrily what had happened to the work. The God answered :

"The truth is I am so ugly that I never venture out in the daytime, and as I only work at night, what can you expect ?")

A CUCKOO PICNIC

Since the 1st May it had been raining or cloudy every day, and we were bored to death. I suggested that we should go and hear the cuckoo, and everyone was wildly excited at once and agreed, saying, "I too ! I too !" Someone said :

"Far away near Kamo River is a bridge. It is not called Tanabata's Bridge, but something like it and more difficult. However, near there the cuckoo sings nearly every day."

"No, no ! It's only a cicada," said another. Anyway, we decided to go out there, and asked the officer on duty to order the carriage to the veranda.

"It would certainly be allowed, as it is raining," we said, and when the carriage came from the north guard-room it arrived at our veranda and four of us got in and started from the northern gate. The others said enviously, "What a pity we can't order another carriage and go together."

But the Empress said "No," so we paid no attention to this.

On our way past the racecourse we saw crowds of noisy people.

"What can be going on?" we asked.

"They are practising archery on horse-back. Pray stop and see," the man who runs beside the carriage answered. He stopped the carriage, but we could see nothing of the General of the Left, who they said had arrived, and only a few sixth-grade people were strolling about.

"It isn't worth watching. Let us get on quickly," we agreed.

And on we went. This road is quite interesting about the time of the Kamo festival.

"By and by we shall come to the house of the Empress's uncle," we said, and we got out of the carriage there.

Lord Akinobu Ason's house is built in the simplest way and is very rustic—paper screens with pictures of horses, and others woven of strips of bamboo and fine grass-woven blinds, and so on. One could see they kept up the old customs, and the house itself had little

spaciousness. Just as we were looking about us with interest the cuckoos burst into song with such zest as to be absolutely noisy. We were dreadfully sorry the Empress could not hear them, and also for those of us who had wanted to come and could not.

"Now you are in the country you must see our country ways," said Akinobu Ason, and accordingly rice plants were brought and some cleanly dressed young women showed us how the stripping of the grain is done and how it is put into a kind of revolving machine. Two of them kept it turning while they marked time with a song. It was very curious, and we laughed so much that we quite forgot the cuckoo and the poems to be written about her.

Then in came food on the beautiful little old tables one sees in Chinese pictures, but that did not interest any of us, and he said :

"I know this is very countrified stuff, but the only way is to keep on attacking the host until he provides something you really like. If you have no appetite it is not like our usual City visitors."

So he cheered us on, saying :

"These bracken fronds I picked myself."

"But surely you don't expect us to sit round the tables like common people," I remonstrated, and at once he had the refreshment taken from the little tables.

"Why, no! One sees all of you are accustomed to the strictest etiquette in the August Presence," he said, and so served us separately.

While we were making merry we heard the driver calling :

"It's going to rain," and out we all hurried and into the carriage.

"But I want to get my poem done before we start," I cried.

"No, no! On the way back!" someone said.

We picked any amount of lovely deutzia along the road and stuck the sprays into the blinds and the sides of the carriage, and thatched the roof with great boughs of it, until it looked exactly as if the carriage were covered with white damask. Our men, much interested, helped us, sticking the sprays into every crevice of the wickerwork, crying, "More, more. A bit just here!" thoroughly enjoying themselves.

In we all got, hoping to meet someone who would notice our display. But no one turned up. There were only dull priests and a few servants on the road. Such a pity! Presently we arrived at the East Ward and said to each other :

"It will never do if we meet no one and not the least notice is taken of our gorgeously decorated carriage!"

So we stopped forthwith in front of the palace

in that ward and asked for the Lord Chamberlain, sending word by the messenger :

"Is the Lord Chamberlain at home ? We are just returning from a cuckoo picnic."

(The Empress's cousin, a lad of eighteen and one of the Fujiwara family.)

Back came the messenger.

"His Lordship says : 'I will come out at once.' Do please wait."

It seems he was putting on his ceremonial trousers in a hurry. So we thought there was no need to wait and whipping up set off for the Eastern Gate. And there he followed us, rushing down the road and tying his trousers as he ran. Behind him rushed his followers and valets. We urged the driver on, faster ! faster, and when we arrived at the gate he overtook us, perfectly breathless. It was then he noticed the splendour of our carriage and said :

"What in the world——! Are there common mortals in such a carriage ? Do get out and let me see !"

And he and his followers laughed with delight over the joke.

"But your poems—your poems ! I want to hear them now !" he begged.

"Now ? Certainly not ! Her Majesty will hear them first !" I said demurely.

The rain began to pelt while we were talking, and he said :

"Why in the world has this gate no roof when every other gate is weather-proof? And to-day of all days, when we want shelter. And how am I to get home? I rushed out after you regardless of consequences, and what am I to do?"

We all chorused:

"Come into the Palace!"

"And may I ask how I am to go there in a soft-crowned cap?"

"Send home for what you want," we suggested.

Down came the rain, and our men began pulling us in with all speed. Off went the Lord Chamberlain, and under an umbrella. Slowly and reluctantly he trudged along, turning to look back with a spray of our deutzia in his hand. It was very amusing.

In the Palace her Majesty asked for the story of our adventures, and we told the tale of the Lord Chamberlain and Ichijo Street. Everyone laughed, even the sulky stay-at-homes. But then came the question:

"And where are the poems?"

Of course, it had to come out that we had made none. The Empress said at once:

"Oh, what a pity! All the officers will have heard of the picnic, and with what face can we say no poems came of such an adventure? You had much better have done it while the cuckoo was singing and you were considering it seriously.

But set to work even now, for if not your visit will be wasted."

Really, we had been idiots. And while we were regretting all this and consulting over poems, in comes a short poem from the Lord Chamberlain written on fine white flower-paper and fastened to the deutzia spray he had taken.

"The cuckoo's cry. Had I known you were fled to seek it
I should have bid you carry my whole heart's greeting to-day."

I thought the messenger might be waiting, so I sent someone hurrying for my writing-box, but the Empress said :

"No—be quick. Use mine !"

And she did me the honour to slip in some paper. So I said to Saishō :

"Be quick. Your turn, please."

"No, yours, please !" said she. And in the midst of our polite wrangling the sky grew black and the rain came down in sheets and the thunder roared so terrifically that we were frightened into rushing away to shut all the blinds and the outside doors in a perfect panic. And poetry was forgotten.

The thunder lasted so long that as it stopped darkness came on. And still we would have struggled with the poems but that many of the

officers and other visitors came up to enquire for the Empress's health after the storm, and of course we had to meet them and do the honours, so again the poems went to the wall as far as I was concerned, and the other ladies did not trouble about it, for they declared the Lord Chamberlain's poem was addressed to me, and it was my business to answer. I was not in the mood for it, much as I regretted it.

"I really wish no one knew anything about the picnic," I said, and the Empress retorted:

"You could certainly patch up a poem among you. It is only that you don't care to."

I think she was a little cross. It was strange altogether.

"But we missed our chance, and now the mood has evaporated," I said.

"You mean your interest has evaporated," she said.

And there we left it.

Two days passed and we were discussing the cuckoo picnic. Saishō said:

"But how did you like the bracken-shoots which our host said he had picked himself?"

The Empress, listening, said with a laugh:

"I think your refreshments were the only things you remembered." And she scribbled the end of a verse on a piece of paper:

"The longing for the bracken haunts her memory still."

"Do be poetical and finish it!" she said. It was really rather amusing, and I took my brush and wrote:

"And drowns the cuckoo's note we sallied out to hear."

"Candid enough!" said the laughing Empress. "But why didn't you remember the cuckoo as affectionately?"

I felt a little out of countenance.

"I don't know why," I said, "but I have a kind of feeling I shall compose no more short poems. I always am so uncomfortable when the subject comes up and your Majesty commands me to set to work. Besides, how am I to do it when I am so stupid as to have no knowledge of metre and evolve a winter poem in spring and a spring one in autumn, and in plum-blossom time descant upon chrysanthemums? You see, my ancestor was a well-known poet, so that mine really ought to be better than others, and, if they were, one might really plume oneself when people said, 'This short poem absolutely fitted the occasion. But then, of course, she had the advantage of a poetical heritage.' But if one has no special aptitude and yet thinks oneself clever, and so composes at large, it really is a little hard on the ancestor!"

The Empress laughed and answered:

"Well, well! Do as you please. I shall not insist on your poetising any more!"

So I was feeling easier in my mind.

But while all this was in my head the Empress's brother was eagerly preparing to hold the All Night Waking. (A tradition that on the Monkey's Day worms might invade the body of a sleeper obliged prudent people to keep awake all night, and the young prince was preparing refreshments and amusements.) As it grew late a competition for short poems was announced, and all the ladies asked to compete. Great excitement? I was there and talking to the Empress about something else, when the Prince came up to me and said :

"Why, is it possible you are not going to write us a poem? Do, I beseech you!"

I answered :

"I have been honoured by permission to do exactly as I please, and so I am not going to write. I have not one idea to rattle on another."

"But how extraordinary! Do you really mean to say you have permission to be dumb? Did her Majesty give it? I don't so much mind about other times, but to-night of all times you cannot refuse!"

He was as eager as possible and I as decided!

While they were criticising the other poems the Empress wrote me a tiny note. I opened it at once and found this :

"Even though a descendant of the famous Motosuke,
Why—why not join in the battle of the poems to-night?"

I was really obliged to laugh. It was so very amusing, and the Prince called out :

“ But what is it ? What is it ? ”

(She wrote :)

“ If I had not the reputation of my heritage to consider,
Would I not gaily join in the battle of poems to-night ? ”

And I said to the Empress :

“ If I had not this incubus of reputation to keep up, I would turn out thousands of poems on the spot.”

THE PLACE OF SECRET MEETING

For secret meeting the summer is perhaps the most delightful time. Dawn comes so early and makes the night so short that the lovers cannot sleep. It is cool, for every place is left wide open, and they long to lengthen out their time together. Above them the crows journey, cawing loudly and very visible now.

But in winter, when one burrows into the deep warm bed with the beloved and listens from there to the boom of the temple bell, it is fascinating to hear it as from a great depth. And the first cock-crow, small as at a distance, for his beak is muffled in feathers, growing louder and louder, nearer and nearer—that also has a curious charm.

It is enraging when a lover has come to see one and immediately there arrive the usual friends and acquaintances. Inside the bamboo blind they come and settle down, talking with interest and with no appearance of intending to leave. Their followers, irritated and yawning widely, are grumbling to themselves :

"What a nuisance ! We may have to endure this until midnight." And even if they say nothing, everyone remembers the poem :

"Though the heart bubbles over, profound is the water
beneath.
Silent thought is deeper than any frothing in words."

Of course, the retainers of high-class people never do these things, and as the common sorts of retainers have these manners, it is better to consider who they come from before engaging them.

REFLECTIONS : RARE THINGS

A bridegroom liked by his father-in-law.

A bride liked by her mother-in-law.

A retainer who never slanders his master.

People in the same service who are thoughtful and courteous to one another.

Men and women and (the third sex) priests who keep up their friendship to the end.

And dyed silk of which one can say, "It is a perfect success."

Rare indeed !

A MOST PRECIOUS THING

Kujyo-Shakujyo is the name of this scripture. The author is unknown, though some attribute it to Fukusanzo. It consists of nine verses, and when the priest has chanted each one he shakes the rod which is called the Shakujyo. It is made of metal at the top, wood in the middle, and horn at the end. From the top hangs a large ring, on which many small rings are threaded. In India the priest bears this shakujyo, and when he walks he makes it clash so that wild beasts or poisonous snakes may flee before it.

(The last verse of this scripture, known as the Nembutso-no-Eko, is as follows :

"Eternal in His glory
In the Ten world regions ;
He holds in His safety
All living creatures who utter His name.")

REFLECTIONS : ANXIOUS MOMENTS

Receiving a letter from a far-away lover when the rice-starch is of such good quality that one is nearly frantic with trying to open it.

When one is in a desperate hurry to go out and must wait for the carriage which someone else has borrowed for what they call a few minutes, saying, "I will send it back." That is real suspense. A carriage comes along the main road, and when one is excitedly thinking it is *the* carriage it turns another way. Maddening! And worse when one wanted the carriage to take one to some show and someone says calmly, "It is probably over now!"

And in case of sight-seeing or religious ceremonies when a party has been made up and one takes the carriage for them and the wretches are not ready and keep delaying. How one thirsts to go on and leave them to their fate!

To be hurried in an answer to a poem when no idea occurs to one. Of course, one should not hurry over an answer to a lover, but the case might happen, and when a man and woman are beginning to fall in love with each other no time must be lost, for sometimes everything may turn on a moment.

REFLECTIONS: ENVIABLE THINGS

When one has been trying to learn a scripture, going over it again and again and still stumbling and forgetting, what is more enviable than to hear priests and nuns reciting it with perfect ease and fluency. One wonders if it ever would be possible to recite as they do.

Another thing one envies is when one is feeling out of sorts and has to stay in bed, with others laughing and talking and frisking about as if they had not a care in the world—that is a most enviable thing.

I happened to go and worship at the Inari Shrine. I was perfectly exhausted when I reached the central shrine, and while I was toiling on, other people came up and passed and were as fresh as possible.

It was just dawn when I started, and though I hurried, at ten o'clock I was only half-way up the hill. It grew hotter and hotter, and I was so exhausted that I simply wept. I had to sit down, and I thought, "Why on earth must I come to pray and make this superhuman effort when there are any number of people who never dream of such a thing." At that moment a woman of about thirty, without any proper travelling costume, and who had only tucked up her skirt, passed me on her way down, talking to the others and saying :

"Well, I intend to go up to pray seven times to-day. I have done it three times already, and after the fourth time it will be nothing to me. I daresay I shall have done with the hill by two o'clock!"

The sort of person I never should have noticed at any other place, but to-day I positively envied her.

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Also I envy anyone who has beautiful hair and especially a prettily growing fringe on the brow. And again I envy the kind of woman who writes beautifully and is apt at composing short poems and ready on every occasion.

I always envy my partner's dice when he has a good throw at backgammon.

And lastly, how enviable is a saint who serenely gives up the world !

CLOUDS

A rain-cloud in a great gale is most beautiful. At daybreak a black cloud thinning into white is beautiful. It seems that the one colour mingles with the other, as though saying :

"The cloud-hue melts into dawn."

A fleecy cloud over the bright moon is lovely also.

MIRRORS OF CONCEITED WISDOM

The modern child.

A witch who is exorcising a sick child. See how she looks about her for the articles she needs for her rites and begins to prepare them. She cuts folded papers with a blunt knife that single paper would be too much for. So she tightens her lips resolutely with the effort, and when it is done

ties it on the bamboo branch with the most tremendous solemnity. Her attitude is wisdom itself. Then come the stories about "The Prince of So-and-so—Lord Asterisk—fearfully ill, you know! but I made a perfect cure of them and was loaded with compliments. Naturally, they had had the best doctor, but he was helpless, and since then they always send for me." Now this really is amusing.

Another wiseacre is the lower-class wife with a dull husband. Sometimes she even succeeds in turning a really sensible man round her finger.

CONTENTMENT

Once, when there were a good many people in the Presence and the Empress talking with us, I said :

"When I am so dispirited and out of love with the world that I want to leave it and rush off to the solitudes, if I find a nice sheet of white paper and a good writing-brush, I am immensely cheered, and feel I can endure life a little longer. Also, when I see a fine green mat with its black pattern on the white damask border and spread it out, I know I could not toss the world away for a mere grudge against life. Strange!"

The Empress said :

"Well, you are easily comforted, I must say!"

And she laughed. The others said :

“ A very easy way to attain to peace ! ”

A long time afterwards, when I was staying in the country and very much out of spirits, the Empress sent a parcel with twenty quires of the nicest, most charming paper and this message :

“ Do come back soon. The Empress sends this paper because she remembered what you said, and she wonders whether it would not be wholesome for you to copy upon it the ‘ *Scripture of Long Life* ! ’ ”

It really was very pleasant. To think oneself forgotten and to be remembered, especially by the Empress ! I was delighted, and in great excitement, and could not think what I should say in answer. Then I wrote :

“ Through the condescending kindness of a Deity
Surely I may attain the age of a crane ! ”

adding, “ I wonder if this is too long a life to hope for ! Please report my answer to the Empress. ”

I sent this. A woman had come as the messenger, so I gave her a single green dress as a reward. I enjoyed making a sort of copy-book with the paper, and it cheered me into forgetting my troubles.

After two days a man in a red dress appeared with a mat, and said :

"A present for you."

"How very strange. Who is it ? " I asked, and one of the maids said inhospitably :

"He must have left it and run away."

She brought it in—it was specially made for sitting upon and beautifully bordered. In my heart I thought it might be from the Empress, but I could not be sure, and I sent people after the man, but he had disappeared. We could not think what to do, and came to the conclusion that he had left it by mistake and would come back for it. I was going to ask if any of the ladies had sent it, but I thought there was no one likely to do it, and it might be the Empress's order. I was very much puzzled. Two days passed and nothing had happened, so I wrote to Lady Saishō.

"I have had a mat sent me. Do you know anything about it ? Please tell me privately. If you know nothing, don't tell anyone I asked."

Then came her answer :

"It is the Empress's secret. So you must not say I told you. No, not even for ages and ages."

I was enchanted that my guess had been right. I wrote a letter and told someone to put it on the balustrade of the Empress's palace. He was in such a state of flurry, however, that the letter slipped off and away it fluttered under the bridge.

REFLECTIONS: PITIABLE THINGS

The house of a man who does not succeed in getting his new appointment is very pitiable. Everybody is sure he is going to succeed this year, and all the retainers and servants collect from many country places to join in the triumphant celebrations, and the noise of arriving carriages never stops for a second.

When the master goes to worship at the shrine or temple they all form up behind him with delight. They are wildly excited and having a splendid time with feasting and drinking. Still, it is odd, even near the dawn of the last ceremonial day, there is no message to announce his success. It seems strange. Then someone's voice! No, only the officials for the ceremony all going back from the Palace. Then comes his man who has been at the Palace since the early evening to make enquiries about his master's success. He is tired and shivering with cold, but no one likes to ask. At last some outside says:

"But what new appointment is my lord to have?"

Silence. The people who depend on their master are bitterly disappointed. Next morning all the happy crowd has crept secretly away. Men grown old in the service who were eagerly hoping go trudging back disappointed.

It really is a tragic business.

It is a sharp stab when one's lover praises a woman with whom he was intimate a long time ago. What must it be if it were someone actually now? Terrible! And yet I can imagine that in some ways it might not be quite as bad.

UNPLEASANT PEOPLE

I hate a man who goes off in a carriage by himself to see festivities. Whoever he is, it does not matter—one should take young people who really enjoy seeing things. It looks so despicable of him when one watches his solitary figure through the blind, craning out to see what is going on.

Another hateful person is the man who leaves his lady-love at dawn, hunting about for his fan and paper in the dark, and muttering, "Strange!" At last he finds it and puts it noisily in his breast, and clacks his fan as he says good-bye, flapping it

about. "Hateful" is really not a strong enough word. He is absolutely revolting.

The same with the man who is leaving very late at night. He must tie the cords of his hat to a nicety when there is no need for it. Far better just to put it on and leave the cords untied. Certainly no one would blame him even if his dress were a little out of order. *That* is not what provokes censure !

The really charming behaviour for a man leaving at dawn is this. He must be very sad to go, and rise very reluctantly, and must sigh when she says earnestly, "Oh, this is shocking! It is getting quite light!" But still he must sit close to her and whisper, whisper, as they have been doing all night. He must be in no hurry to dress. When he has to leave, they go out together to the gate, and he says, "How lonely—how lonely is the day-time!" She will miss him terribly and ache that she must let him go. And yet it is just his way of doing things that impresses her, for if he scampers off in a rush, gathering up his things into his breast and tying the cords to a hair, she dislikes him then and there.

REFLECTIONS : INSECTS

I pity the weaver-moths. It is said their father was a demon, and the mother dreaded lest their hearts should be evil, so she rolled them in poor webs and said to them, "Be contented. When the autumn winds blow, I will return." They never guessed that she had deserted them, and when the breeze sighed in August, they chirruped very piteously, "Chiyo ! Chiyo !" ("Milk, please, milk, please !")—a sad little cry.

The bowing insect is touching. I wonder if in such little hearts there can be any reverence for the Buddha ! They go about bowing their heads as if in worship. Even in a dark place you can hear them bowing, and that is rather amusing. Ants, of course, are horrible to look at, and yet it is very interesting to see with what ease they can walk on the water with their light little bodies.

REFLECTIONS : BIRDS

The cry of the wild goose is more beautiful heard from far off. Among water-birds, I love mandarin ducks, and to watch them brushing away the frost from each other's feathers.

The bush-warbler composes her short musical poems as if to one beloved. Her voice is lovely,

and she is a graceful little person, but the pity is that she never will sing at Court. I heard this a long time ago, and scarcely believed it, but during ten years at Court I never heard her. A pity she does not sing at night, but it cannot be helped if her temperament is drowsy. In summer, to the end of August, she sings with her usual charm, but the vulgar people then change her name and call her "Worm-Eater," which is too horrible. One would not mind it for a common bird like a sparrow. I should find it more appropriate if she sang only in spring.

The cuckoo's note is charming—I have no words to express it. When the season comes, we hear quite suddenly that clear triumphant cry. They live in the shelter of the blossoming deutzias and hide themselves for a time. This is such an interesting thing that it makes one a little jealous. In the short night of the May rain one wakes from sleep eagerly waiting for the cuckoo's note that one may hear it before anyone else. One waits and waits, and suddenly a beautiful cry comes through the night. Lovely! It gives one the true heart-longing. But everything that sings at night is charming—excepting only a baby!

COURT TALK

Under the blind door on the Eastern side of the Empress's palace I had seen Lord Tonoben

(one of the great Fujiwara family to which Sei Shōnagon herself belonged) whispering with someone for such a long time that at last I intruded upon him and said softly :

"Who is she ?"

"She is the Ben-no-naishi" (a lady official), answered Lord Tonoben.

"But what are you talking about in such a friendly fashion ? If her lover came, she would throw you to the winds at once !"

"Now what put that into your head ? It is exactly what I was telling her—that she must not dream of throwing me overboard."

He is such a handsome and splendid person that he never affects anything to gain attention. He is simply what he is, and everyone takes him at that. I know him as he really is, and so I say always in the presence of the Empress that he is very far from being commonplace. And she agrees with my opinion.

"A woman adorns herself for her lover, and a warrior will die for his friend"—so it has been said from time immemorial. And this is his spirit as compared with our own times.

He and I often talk and promise to follow the example of the willow which grows on the shore at Tōtōmi. (It grows patiently, prune it how you will, and so with their friendship.) But the young women at Court whole-heartedly detest him because he speaks with perfect candour of

anything he dislikes when they are slandering others.

"The most disagreeable man living!" they say. "He never recites a scripture, never hums a song like others, has no sense of humour!"

But these are women with whom he has nothing to do, and he says:

"Let a woman have eyes straight set in her forehead, and nose flat on the face, I could still love her if her mouth is charming, her chin and throat graceful, and if she speaks sweetly. I own, however, in spite of this that an ugly woman is detestable!"

And so of course the women of the Court who have very angular chins and no charm to boast of take their revenge in saying the most malicious things possible about him, even in the Empress's own presence.

He always asks for me when he has a message for her, and when I am in the ladies' room or at my country house he writes to me or comes himself, saying:

"If you are going to the Palace later, please present my words to her Majesty."

And then I answer:

"And why? Surely there are many to help you better than I?"

But he never listens, so then I solemnly instruct him according to the precepts left by Prince

Kujo—"Far better to do things on the spur of the moment and not to be so formal!"

"Exactly my own character!" he retorts, "but it is frightfully hard to correct one's impulses."

This made me question him once:

"Then I wonder what meaning you give the maxim 'Don't hesitate to correct!'"

He laughed, saying:

"Now, listen to me! People say you and I are very intimate, and certainly we discuss things freely enough. But why are you still so shy? Why not let me see your face?"

"Well—why? Let us say because I am quite terribly ugly, and since you are always saying you can love no ugly woman, I dare not let you see me."

"You think I might dislike you? Very well then. You had certainly better not reveal yourself."

So he said, and never looked at me, though he could have seen me easily if he had turned the other way. I believe that man is sincere even in his very heart of hearts.

Well, one morning I slept until sunrise with Shikibu-no-Omoto in the side-room. Suddenly the inner door opened and in came the Emperor and Empress. We were absolutely confused, and the Emperor and Empress laughed tremendously while we pulled our brocade dresses all over our

heads from the heap beside us, they standing to watch the people passing to and from the Guard-room. Some of them stopped in passing to have a word with us, and the Emperor said, laughing :

"Keep it dark that we are here !"

Presently they were leaving, and the Empress said, "Now follow me, both of you."

"We will present ourselves in the Presence directly we have made up our faces," we said, and took our time. After they left, when we were still discussing the beauty of the Imperial pair, I noticed something dark near the south door beside the silken screen and thought it was Noritaka (husband of the sister of Murasaki, the authoress of *The Story of Genji*). So we went on talking without troubling our heads. He began to smile, and still I thought it was Noritaka. But no—so in my surprise and laughter I drew the screen and hid myself. It was Lord Tonoben, and I regretted it deeply, for I have never allowed him to see my face. Shikibu was safely hidden, for she happened to be sitting with her back to him. He came in and said :

"At last I have seen you as you are."

"I thought it was Noritaka," I said, "and so I was careless. But I don't understand why you said you cared nothing for seeing me and then took this trouble to do it !"

"Well, I have been told that women are most beautiful when they are just waking from sleep,

so I went to someone's room and peeped in, and then I came here, for I wanted to see you, and I was here when the Emperor was here, but you never saw me ! ”

And since that time he has come freely behind the fine-bamboo blind of my room.

REFLECTIONS: PLUMP PEOPLE

Young men and babies should be plump.

Governors of the country districts should be plump also. If the people in such sorts of authority are thin and dry, other people are apt to think their characters are dry and irritable also.

SERVANTS

It is a great mistake to have a carelessly dressed coachman. With other servants it may not matter so much, but for the one who stands in the front seat and is always under our eyes it is disgusting if he is dirty. And certainly one would not choose to have the followers of the ox-carriage dirty either.

Generally speaking, servants should be well dressed, but even an old dress well put on may serve. At a house where many servants are kept it is disgusting to see the waiting-maids ill clothed. For those who are staying in the house

or come on an errand or as guests it is a very pleasant sight to see the servants as they should be.

Passing in front of someone's house, I saw a man like a retainer spreading straws on the ground. A boy of about ten with really beautiful hair was hanging up a robe, and another, five or six years old, his hair just growing to the neck and with delightful rosy cheeks, was playing with a toy bow. They were so charming that I wanted to stop my carriage and take them in my arms.

At the next unknown house they were burning some delicious incense. It pleased me immensely.

At the house of one of the nobility the main gate was open and a new carriage of the sort which has beautiful russet curtains was waiting. Some followers of the fifth or sixth grade who had trussed up the hems of their robes at the back were holding white rods on their shoulders, and many uniformed officials carrying quivers were coming and going. A very handsomely arranged set-off, especially when a very pretty maid came out and called :

"Are Lord So-and-so's retainers there ? "

I was very much pleased.

REFLECTIONS: UNSEEMLY THINGS

A woman who has straggly hair and indulges in a dress of rich white damask.

A woman who frizzes her hair and decorates it with hollyhocks.

Poor writing on elegant pink paper.

An elderly woman with a protuberant stomach panting along and jealous of her young lover who, she may well guess, runs after others.

An old woman who has no teeth eating a plum, her face all awry with its sourness.

A handsome man who has an ugly wife.

REGRETTABLE THINGS

To find when one has sent a poem to others or in answer to theirs that one remembers one or two exquisitely right words which would have made it perfection. Maddening!

When one is racing through a length of sewing and draws the needle, and the thread one has forgotten to knot sails after it! And then one discovers one has been sewing wrong-side-out!

Once the Empress was staying at the Minami no In, the Lord Michitaka's house, and he and she were talking in the western wing. All the Court-ladies were in the sitting-room, and it was dull,

and we were romping about to amuse ourselves when a message came.

"Please hurry all you can, all of you, with this piece of work. It is wanted as quickly as possible."

A dress of the Empress's was brought in, and we gathered in the front room to the south and each of us snatched a part of it and began to race against time. We looked like lunatics, for each sat too far apart to see what the others were doing, and everyone was stitching for her life. Myobu-no-monoto, the Empress's wet-nurse, raced ahead with the left side of the dress—but alas! wrong-side-out, and moreover never finished off the stitching, and without noticing this took herself off. Of course, we found the mistake when we came to put the dress together, and the lady who first spied it called out, laughing:

"You simply *must* do it over again."

Myobu retorted:

"And why? Who is going to do it over again unless she made a mistake? If it were a damask-patterned dress it must certainly be done. But this is a plain dress, and what is the good of bothering? Still, if you *will* call it wrong side, let someone do it who hasn't set a-stitch yet."

It was really absurd to see the faces of the two who had to re-sew it as they said ruefully:

"What is the good of talking and leaving it like this?"

For the dress was wanted that evening for the Empress to wear to the Emperor's palace, and she sent a message to us with it:

"I shall know that the quickest worker is the one who loves me best."

Another regrettable thing is when a letter intended for one person is delivered to another who was not on any account to see it. And it makes it worse when the messenger begins apologising and arguing with mulish obstinacy. If I cared nothing for lookers-on, I could dash at him and slap his face.

And yet another. To plant flowers and begin to enjoy their lovely bloom and then see one day that a man has marched in with his flower-basket and spade and has dug them out and is carrying them off. Disgusting! If a gentleman were there, and especially a man of rank, would the wretch attempt this? We said what we could, but he answered, "Oh, but only so few!" and never so much as listened. I can tell you, it was devastating!

Or when one is staying with some provincial governor and an airified servant belonging to some grandee comes along and is insolent, and

with an impudent look which says plainly enough, "Well, and what can you do to me!"

Or when some man picks up a private letter and carries it into the garden, where he stands and reads it comfortably. The unfortunate owner rushes madly as far as she dares to get it back, and yet must halt behind the bamboo blind and watch him reading while she thirsts to dash out and at him!

And a girl who is cross about nothing and smartly leaves her lover for another sleeping-place. He tries to draw her back gently, but she will not, and he thinks her unreasonable and pettish. Back he goes to bed and draws the futons comfortably over him. It is a frightfully cold night and she has only a single garment. Oh, how she suffers, thinking also that she is the only person awake and all the world asleep and getting sorrier and sorrier for herself as the night goes on! She thinks how much better it would have been to begin and end the quarrel earlier. Then things become really frightening. Such strange noises both inside and outside the house! She tries to creep into the bed and lifts up the futons near him. Of course, he pretends to be asleep, and then says drowsily, "But really, why not keep it up a little longer?"

UNPLEASANT THINGS AND PEOPLE

When one is talking with a guest, to hear the unreserved family chatter from an inside room and be unable to let fly a "Hush!"

A lover who gets drunk and repeats the same things over and over again.

Not knowing that a person is within hearing and speaking one's mind about her. She may not be anyone very particular, but still it leaves one aghast.

A man who recites his own poems which are anything but beautiful and flourishes the praise others have given them. No, I cannot stand that!

A woman who cannot so much as tune the *kōtō* and yet shows off upon it with immense pride, and that in the presence of someone who is a master!

AFTER RAIN

It had been raining all a September night, and in the morning it cleared up in radiant sunshine. It delighted me to watch the garden chrysanthemums bowed and dripping with dew. The cobwebs on the fences were left in some parts and the drops of rain threaded upon them glittered like crystals. Lovely!

The sun climbed higher and the *hagi* flowers weighted down with rain were released as it

slipped off. Without a touch the sprays sprang up. It charmed me. But also it amazed me to think how few there are who would find anything at all worth looking at in this.

THE BACHELOR

I wonder where he had been spending the night. A very good-looking man came back at dawn looking very sleepy; he rubbed his ink very thick in the dish and began with some emotion to write a letter. He sat, spreading out his cloak, and above the white under-dress was wearing crimson and gold-coloured ones. Even while he was writing he did not forget his rather crumpled garments. When the letter was finished he did not toss it over to his servant but went himself and called a sharp-looking boy and gave him a secret order. He watched the boy on his way for awhile, murmuring a part of a scripture. In the inner room the washing-basin was prepared and also his breakfast, so he went in and to the desk. There he began intoning a scripture from memory. The atmosphere was all reverence and devotion. Suddenly back came the messenger and actually winked at him. The intoning stopped short and he eagerly read the reply. Now, was this a sin or wasn't it? It was certainly amusing.

THE EXORCISM

A house with a fine garden and many trees. The blinds on the east and south sides were all opened and the interior visible. It looked cool and shady. In the main room was a four-foot silk screen, and before it sat on a cushion a very good-looking priest. He had a beautiful dress covered with a transparent black robe and a fine brocaded stole. His fan was a yellowish-red, and he was reciting the charm of the Thousand-Handed Kwannon. I wondered who the possessed person was! She seemed to be a grown-up girl with most wonderful hair, wearing rather beautifully a white silk single dress and a long skirt. She came out in front of a three-foot screen arranged for her. The priest swung round and gave her a small glittering rod to hold. He said, "Now, please!" and began reciting the charms. Most interesting to watch. Many ladies came outside the bamboo blinds and stood to see what happened.

Before long she began to tremble from head to foot and swooned. It was alarming to watch the effect of his spells. Her brother, a lad, was fanning her gently and several awe-stricken friends were watching. Still, if she had been conscious, it would have been very uncomfortable. Naturally, one knew she was not suffering, but when she began to moan and contort herself,

they all pitied her terribly, and coming to the screen re-arranged her dress, which had become disordered.

She was recovering. Hot water was sent for, and some young women brought the basin, turning every way to see all they could. They looked very well in single dresses and pretty pale-coloured skirts. At the hour of the Monkey (2 p.m.) the devil surrendered at discretion and was driven out. She said feebly :

"I thought I was hidden behind the screen. Amazing ! I wonder if I did anything dreadful !"

She was terribly embarrassed and kept hiding her face in her hair. She would have gone in at once but that he delayed her and continued the spells for a while, then asking her :

"And now how are you ? Refreshed ?"

He smiled at her, but she was utterly abashed.

"I really ought to stay a little longer," he said, "but I have an evening service very soon."

They tried to delay him, overwhelming him with thanks :

"Please—please stay a little. We wish to offer our gratitude."

But he was in a hurry, and a highly-born lady came out from behind the silk screens and knelt, saying :

"What can express our gratitude for such a wonderful and delightful event ! By your favour she is all but recovered, whereas this morning she

was in agony. We offer our repeated and grateful thanks. If you can spare the time to-morrow, will you graciously come and visit her again ? ”

“ It seems to be a very vindictive possession,” he said gravely. - “ Please keep a careful eye upon her. I am rejoiced that she is doing so well.”

And after that brief reply he went off, leaving behind him as much awe as though the Lord Buddha himself had been present.

WHO COMES FIRST ?

One day when there were many noble people in the Presence, some of them the Empress's relations and any number of officers, I was talking with a few ladies as I leaned against the pillar in the side-room. The Empress tossed something to me. I opened it and saw she had honoured me with a written question.

“ Shall I venture to care for you if I cannot put you first of all ? What is your own opinion ? ”

It so happened that I had spoken on this subject already in the Presence, and had said :

“ Certainly if people care for one it is worth nothing unless one comes first. For my part I would sooner be even hated and ill-used. If I were to be ranked only second or third, I could

not endure it. I would sooner commit suicide. I must always be first."

Of course, the Empress remembered this, and now brush and writing-paper were put before me and I had to make my reply in the August Presence. I wrote :

" Among the lotus-seated dwellers in Paradise,
Who would not be thankful to be even the least and last ? "

" Aha ! You have become humbler ! " she said with a little laugh. " But keep your pride. Isn't it better to aim at being beloved by the highest and holding the very first rank with them ! "

It was decidedly amusing.

THE MORNING LETTER

He used to send her a letter every morning, but now he was angry and would not send it. The night before he had said :

" No need for another word. I shall not come again."

Next day there was nothing, and she was desperately lonely, for the dawn had always brought a letter. She thought to herself :

" Ah, he is cruel, cruel ! "

And next day the rain fell drearily, and it crawled on to noon, and still nothing. She thought :

" Now at last all is over."

In the evening she was sitting on the veranda. A boy with an umbrella brought a letter from him. She opened it hungrily. It said this:

"The water is rising in the rain."

That one little bit was better than a whole poem of protestation.

(This is the whole poem—

"In the marsh of Yōdo,
Steadily the water rises in the rain.
So my love swells within my heart."

No wonder her grief was ended !)

WINTER MORNING : LOVE-LETTERS

In the morning the sky was serenely blue. Suddenly heavy clouds came up. It darkened and snow fell. I watched the snow blotting out all in white and drifting in heaps. A tall handsome soldier holding an umbrella came up and a letter was pushed in under the door. The letter was on fine white paper and the address written with very black ink, slightly wet with snow, so that in some parts the ink was a little lighter, in others deep black. The letter was in very small writing and the lines close and fine. She read and reread it for a long time. I wondered what it said. It was engrossing even to an outsider, and when she smiled as she read, I wished I could see just that bit. But one so

far off could only imagine what those black letters might say.

A beautiful long-haired woman received a letter in the dusk. She could not stand the delay of fetching a light, so she took up a glowing bit of charcoal from the brazier and read as best she could by that difficult light. I found that rather moving.

A COMPLICATION

Lately, while I was resting at my country house, people got up quite a little scandal about my receiving so many officers. Of course, there was nothing to it, so I could afford to be less angry than I might have been. There is no earthly reason why I should say "Not at home" to anyone who comes either by day or night and send them away disappointed. But the talk was annoying in a way, because some of them are not even specially intimate friends, and so I resolved that this time I would not tell anyone except Tsunefusa and Narimasa where I was going.

One day Norimitsu (a special friend, not a lover) came and said :

"Yesterday To no Chujyo eagerly asked me where you were, saying, 'No one can possibly believe you don't know where your friend is.' Of course, I said I hadn't a notion, but he insisted

angrily, and it is always difficult to keep it up if one really knows all the time. Tsunefusa was sitting by me pretending complete innocence, and I knew I should be done if I caught his eye. I was on the edge of it when I saw some funny-looking seaweed stuff on the table, and I stuffed a bit of it into my mouth. No doubt they thought it was a curious thing to do between meals, but I held on to the secret, for if I had laughed, you would have been completely given away. It is certain To no Chujyo believes we knew nothing."

"And mind you never do give me away!" I said, and several days went by in peace.

But very late one night someone knocked violently and startled me beyond words, for I could not think what was the matter. I sent someone to find out, and it was a messenger from Norimitsu. Everyone in the house was asleep, so I drew the light nearer and read :

"To-morrow finishes the scripture chanting, and To no Chujyo is on duty attending the fast-day service. He is pretty certain to ask me where you are, for he really is very keen about it. So what am I to do ? Shall I let out where you are ? Tell me what to do and I will be absolutely obedient."

I wrote no answer, but simply enclosed a little bit of dry seaweed.

After awhile he came out to see me and said :
" Well, really, I have had a desperate time all night with To no Chujyo. He is not a bad sort, and I felt rather sorry about it all. And you gave me no instructions—only sent a bit of seaweed,¹ which might mean anything! Wasn't there some mistake ? "

Mistake, indeed ! So likely that I could send such a thing in mistake ! I did not scold him, though I could have wept at his being such an idiot. I tore off a piece of paper and wrote.

" I come from the sea-home of the fisherwoman
Who dives beneath the water to hide.
She will not have her secret known.
And so she sends me to you."

" Oh, poetry ? No. I won't read that ! " he cried, and fanned it away and took himself off.

This made a little coolness, but, however, he wrote me a letter, saying :

" Even if there was a misunderstanding, please don't forget our pledge, and do remember you adopted me as a kind of brother."

And then it came into my head that he had always said, " I take it as a sign that a person cares nothing for me who fires off poems at me. In fact, I regard anyone who does that as an

¹ The seaweed as a reminder.

enemy. So when you are tired of me, write me a poem, and I shall know what to think ! ”

I immediately wrote a short poem in answer :

“ When the Brother and Sister Mountain of Yamato crumbles
One does not lament it as if it were the Yoshino River.”

I sent it off, and I wonder whether he ever looked at it. Anyhow, he sent no answer, and some time afterwards he was promoted and went off to Tōtōmi and that was the end of it all, and just as well, since we disliked one another !

SCANDAL

A person who they said should never have been allowed there was seen in my corridor in the early dawn with a servant hiding him with an umbrella. I overheard the maid gossiping and at first wondered what it was all about. Then it dawned upon me that it concerned a visitor of my own.

He is a *jige* (lower than the fifth grade and with no permission to enter the palace), but still by no means to be despised. People ought to have understood that and had no business to be taking that superior tone ! While I was thinking how strange it was, in came a letter from the Empress. I was to answer as soon as possible. Greatly astonished, I tore it open. A drawing of a big umbrella and someone hidden behind it, but a

hand was holding it, and at the bottom of the picture was written :

"The mountain of Mikasa¹
When dawn breaks from the peaks——"

The Empress takes such a part in even trivial things about us that I had particularly wished to keep this tiresome thing from her. It worried me to have such rumours flying about. However, she wrote very kindly, and it became amusing. On another piece of paper I drew pelting rain and wrote under it :

"Reports which are certainly not rain
Are falling, falling.
Suppose there should be no rain after all !"

I sent this in, and the Empress laughed over it with one of her women.

THE ARITŌSHI SHRINE

Tsurayuki, now called Aritōshi (a very famous poet), once rode by this shrine. His horse fell sick, so he composed a short poem and offered it, having heard that this god is a Healer. The horse recovered at once, which was curious.

At this time there was an Emperor who would have none but young people in the world and started a Fixed Period. Everyone over forty was

¹ The Mountain of the Three Umbrellas.

to be put an end to. Accordingly, everyone over forty made for the country and hid themselves, and in City-Royal there was not one left.

But a man ranked as Chujyo, a brilliant person and honoured by all, had parents at that time about seventy years old. This order made them terribly uneasy, and he, being a truly filial son, could not bring himself to exile them. Therefore, he dug up the earth inside his house secretly in the night-time and made a little place where they could live and he see them daily. Then he announced to the Court that his parents also had disappeared.

It seems hard. Why should it be contraband to hide one's parents? A terrible world, indeed! The father, however, was extremely acute and intelligent and, as I have said, the son was the same.

Now, the Emperor of China had a strategic eye on Japan, and one means to his end was to set us questions extremely difficult of solution. About this time a beautifully planed polished log of about two feet long came from him with the question:

“Which is the real end?”

Not a soul could answer, and our Emperor worked himself up into great excitement. Chujyo sensibly went off to consult his hidden father. The old gentleman considered and said:

“Go to a rapid river-current. Standing on the

shore, pitch the log into the stream cross-wise. After turning and swinging round, it will head downstream. Mark that end."

When Chujyo arrived in the Presence, he gave out this oracle with a learned air and went off with a crowd of people to make the experiment. He marked the head and sent it back. Radiant success!

Again, the Chinese Emperor sent two snakes with the question:

"Which is male and which female?"

Nobody knew, and he hurried to his father again.

"Let the two be placed side by side, tails toward a fine leafy branch close by. The female will move first."

He tried the experiment in the palace. It succeeded, and he sent one back marked.

After a long delay came a small jewel pierced at either end and between the holes a passage-way looped seven times. It was offered with the message:

"Kindly thread it. In this country everyone can do as much."

Even the skilled workers were baffled. No one could grapple with the situation. Again Chujyo went to his father.

The wise old man knew the trick.

"Catch two big ants. Tie a fine thread round their middles. To the end of the thread fasten

a bigger one and smear the opening of the jewel with honey."

He hurried to the Emperor and it was done. The ants crept in on the trail of the honey and came out at the other end. The jewel was sent back threaded. That finished the test. They said in China :

"Japan is a little too clever for us !"

Of course, the Emperor was delighted. He said :

"And now about the reward ! High rank or what ?"

Chujyo answered :

"As to that—high rank does not tempt me. All I ask is that all the exiled parents may return and live in peace in City-Royal."

"Easy enough—that !" said the Emperor, and gave the order. Back they all came, gay as larks ! And Chujyo was promoted to be a minister.

Now, what I wonder is, whether his father became the Kami (God) of this shrine ? For when someone went to worship there, the Kami appeared to him in a dream saying :

"I wonder if all know
The skill of the man who threaded
The Jewel of Seven Pathways !"

And I wonder if the shrine is called Aritōshi for this reason.

(Aritōshi—The Pathway of the Ants.)

TEMPLE DANCING

At the time of the Kamo extra festival there was the final dance at the Palace. In the evening the watch-fire rose in a great flame of delicious outline and the thrilling flute-notes of the sacred dance were played as skilfully as if in time to its wavering and with the beautiful voices of the singers. It was so enthralling that we had no time to notice the chilliness of our thin dresses and that our hands, holding our fans, were numbed. It was really terribly cold. When the leader of the dancers calls the singers, they obey with precision, and one likes to watch his satisfaction. When I am in the country I can never be satisfied to see only the procession, so I follow them to the temple and leave my carriage under the trees and watch the smoke of the torches curling in the air and the reflections of the fire on the coloured cords and the glittering dresses more beautiful than in daytime.

The dancers' attitudes as they stamp loudly on the boards of the bridge, keeping step to the song, are an inspiration, and the flutes and running water keep time together as if they moved to the same measure. Surely it must enchant the God himself! A man called Shōshō was one of the dancers last year, and I watched him with delight in his exquisite skill. Now he is dead and gone, and they say his ghost haunts the first bridge of the

upper shrine. I thought this would embitter my pleasure in the dance, but no—I still delight in it.

THE MASS

The Empress was to attend mass next day, so I went up to the Nijyo Palace this evening. There were groups of intimate friends talking with a screen before them. Some had just assembled and were busy getting their dresses ready, heaping them together or making up their faces and having their hair dressed. They were as excited as if there never would be such a day as to-morrow in the whole of their lives.

One of the ladies came up to me, saying :

"The Empress starts at four in the morning. Why didn't you come earlier ? Someone sent a fan for you and asked where you were staying ?"

I had expected an early start, so I was ready. The dawn came and sunrise. They said the carriages would be drawn up under the eaves of the West palace and we should start from there, so off we all went to the corridor. The newcomers were extremely cautious as to their manners !

The Empress was in the Western palace with her father, and she wanted to see the ladies start, so behind the bamboo blinds were the Empress, the Crown Princess, the two younger princesses (her sisters), and their father and his wife.

At both sides of our carriage, right and left,

were her brother and Sammi-no-Chujyo helping to hold up the bamboo blinds and the silk curtains that we might get in. They called the names in order, and four were to go in each carriage. Really, it was rather an embarrassing business. Behind the bamboo blinds were so many watchful eyes, and if the Empress were to see anything she disapproved of I should simply collapse.

I perspired to such an extent that I feared my hair would drip! I could scarcely get in, and all the time near the carriage the Prince, as handsome as a picture, was smiling at me. It was a nightmare. Certainly nothing to be proud of!

After we were packed in, the carriages went off to the Nijyo road and were ranked like carriages at a festival. I was afraid people would come and stare at us, and people of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades came up and talked to us with the utmost affectation.

Led by the Empress's father, the men all went to meet the Emperor's mother. I supposed it would be a long wait, but as the sun climbed higher her procession came. Fifteen carriages, four of them carrying nuns. From the back one could see their black costumes with rosaries of white quartz, very graceful and beautiful, of course, bamboo blinds and silk curtains of light violet shading into deep purple at the ends. The next ten carriages were for the Court-ladies, whose

dresses of cherry, violet, and crimson were charming. When the sun pierced through the haze in the blue sky and harmonised the dresses, the sunshine only could excel the splendour of the brocades. I wondered if they found our procession as interesting as we did theirs.

While I was wondering when the Empress's procession would start, the men began to lead their horses out. And now came the Empress's norimono (palanquin). We had admired the Empress-Mother's procession, but this completely eclipsed it. The sun was now radiant—even the leaves glittered and shed flickers of light on the beautiful colour of the curtains of the norimono. It was very impressive even to me, who am accustomed to attend in her august presence.

After her norimono had passed, they harnessed the oxen to the carriages and we followed it, feeling prouder and more magnificent than I can describe. We arrived at Sekizengi. They were playing and dancing the dance of Shishi and Komaimu. What with the flute music and the beat of the drum, I felt as if I were in the Buddha's own Paradise. Had I flown up to Heaven? In the interior grounds were many pavilions with fine bamboo blinds and beautiful curtains. The whole was really of an unearthly loveliness. Our carriage drew up to the veranda, and the Prince and Sammi-no-Chujyo told us to get out quickly.

It was not nearly so embarrassing as getting in. The Prince is really amazingly handsome. He was raising the bamboo blinds and begging us to hurry. My hair, which had been beautifully combed, felt as if it were standing on end, and, moreover, there was one patch which might have been red instead of black, so I hesitated and said :

"Please let the outermost lady get out first." She hesitated too, perhaps with the same idea. "Please, please go to the other side. You are far too gracious to us!" I said to him. He laughed outright.

"This is just fright!" he said, but happily he went off. Just as we were getting out he came back.

"The Empress says, 'Help her to get down and keep her from Nunetaka's sight!' That was really why I was waiting for you, only you were in such a fright!"

So he helped me and took me to her, and I realised how very gracious her order had been.

When I arrived, about eight ladies were at the edge of the balcony, where one could have a good view. The Empress was sitting there.

"I helped her to dodge all the eyes!" said the Prince to the Empress.

She came out from behind the curtain. She had not changed her dresses yet and looked adorable, especially in the crimson ones with a

willow over-dress of Chinese damask. Impossible to see such lovely things elsewhere as the colours of all these damasks! She asked what I had thought of her procession.

"Perfectly splendid!" I answered. "But if one tries to describe what one feels in words it becomes commonplace."

In this sunshiny veranda she looked even lovelier, for the sun caught the ornament set upright where her hair was parted. Really, she beggars description.

It was all a very great distinction for me. These things sound like self-advertisement when I say them, and it might not be pleasant for the Empress to be known for an attachment to anyone. She might be criticised. But truth is truth, so why should I disguise it? I too have my difficulties, like everyone else.

I was wearing five crimson dresses with the cherry-blossom pattern, and the Empress's father said to me, joking:

"We have all been in confusion because one of the priest's robes is missing. Now, how would it be if I asked you to lend us one of yours. The perfect colour! I wonder whether you had that idea in view when you chose it!"

We all laughed. The Prince a little way off heard it and said:

"Her Reverence the Lady Sei!"

Even that trifle amused us.

The real priest wore gorgeous red robes, a kesa (stole) of violet brocade and very light-coloured dresses and full trousers. He was so handsome and graceful that he really looked like the divine Jizo-Sama. It was amusing that he joined the ladies. People laughed aside and said :

"It has a lack of dignity, compared with the other priests, to see him talking with ladies. Not *quite* the thing !"

The ceremony of the mass began. Inside each of the red lotuses (artificial) was put a Tripitaka Scripture and distributed to the priests and higher-grade people. This is a very auspicious thing. Then was held the priests' procession and recitation and prayers, and after awhile the ritual dance. But I was really tired with a whole day's sightseeing.

The ladies who did not know that the Empress was going up to the Palace went back to the Nijyo Palace—and waited and waited, but she never appeared. Those who were wearing beautiful new dresses in which they were very uncomfortable were as cross as possible and very cold, but lamentations were in vain. Next morning when their servants brought their things they scolded them violently :

"Why on earth were you so careless ?"—and so on. But the servants had the best of it.

It poured next day, and her father said to the Empress :

"Look at to-day. Did you ever know such luck as yesterday's weather?" Indeed, he had reason to be pleased.

A JOY-RIDE NEARLY A THOUSAND YEARS AGO

On the 24th December it was past midnight when the people who had attended the evening service got to bed. The snow had been falling for days, but it stopped at day-dawn and there was a bitter wind. Great icicles formed and the earth showed black in patches, but everywhere the roofs were dazzling white—even the shabby little roofs of the poor glittered in splendour. At dawn they were bathed in moonlight—lovely to behold. They were as though thatched with silver, and the icicles were rods of crystal, some short, some long, but as if they were set there for beauty's sake. What one feels when one sees such a sight cannot be told in words.

The bright moonlight lit the inside of the carriage, and the bamboo blind was rolled up. *She* wore red plum-colour and white, the colours lovely in the moonlight, and beside her was one who wore full trousers with a rich close pattern and loosely tied cloak. A little of the stuff showed at one side of the carriage, so if others saw it they could guess something. The moon was so bright that she shrank back into the

shelter of the carriage, but he drew her into the light again and both laughed.

He began to recite the poem of "The Frozen Water" and repeated it. Ah, how happy! How willingly would she have spent the whole night like this! She grieved and grieved that they reached home so soon.

REFLECTIONS: THINGS TO BE ASHAMED OF

1. A priest appointed to the all-night service who nods asleep on the slightest provocation.

2. A priest at the same service who does not realise all the tittering, chattering gossip of the young women there whose every thought is malice or slander of the others. Some of the older ladies really broke loose about this nuisance once in the Empress's presence, and still the young people took no notice and chattered and then yawned themselves off to sleep afterwards without any ceremony. I declare I blush still when I think of it.

3. A man face to face with a woman to whom he is not true. He tricks her, yet lets her trust him—a shameful thing. He may have a reputation for kindness to keep up, and so he takes that ground for deceiving her about the fidelity of his love. Yet he talks cruelly to her of the others and cruelly of her to them. It is a vile thing for

a man to fool a woman like this, for he knows that she believes his every word and is confident that she is the first with him always.

Still, she herself is never ashamed when she happens to meet a man she has thrown over, even though he feels her coldness. But I wonder what sort of a heart the first man has!—no pity, no fear for their separation! It is a revolting thing that he should talk of the others to her and criticise them. And sometimes such a man will tempt some woman who is all alone in the world and then throw her off, pretending to know nothing about her solitary condition.

REFLECTIONS: THINGS WHICH ARE RATHER AWKWARD

When we have indulged in a little scandal about someone and a wretched child remembers it and carefully repeats it in that person's hearing!

When others are talking of melancholy happenings and crying over them, and when one certainly sympathises and yet cannot wring out a tear. I am always in this plight. And yet when I hear of anything perfectly over-joying I can gush out in tears like a fountain. On the way back from the Imperial visit to Nawata the Imperial carriage was stopped a little distance away from his Majesty's mother's veranda and he sent his respects to her. It is auspicious in the supremest

degree when the Emperor pays respect to anyone—indeed one of the most joyful things in the world, and yet I must needs choke with tears and ruin all the powder on my face—in fact, destroy my make-up. Could anything be more imbecile?

As the Imperial messenger went to the gallery it was most thrilling. He was escorted by four officers in beautiful uniforms. The grooms were also very well got up and came cantering down the main street, which had been cleaned and brilliantly decorated. He dismounted a little way off and then approached the Princess, who sat behind the bamboo blind and waited. Her steward received him, and directly the answer was given he cantered back to the Imperial coach and reported to the Emperor. Words fail me to describe that delightful scene.

I was enchanted because I could realise what would be in the Princess's heart, and how it would burn with joy when she saw the glory of the Emperor's passing by. How people would laugh if they knew how I had cried over it! But even among ordinary people the triumph of a child means joy. And in this case it is simply wonderful to consider.

A VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

In January when one arrives at the temple for a long stay it is very cold. It is beautiful when

everything is frozen after the frequent falls of snow but horrible when the thaw comes with rain.

When we went to the Hatsuse Temple (the Temple of Kwannon above Yamāto) our carriage drew up at the log steps while they were preparing our rooms. Some young priests in lay dress and with high clogs on their feet were running up and down without any precaution and murmuring whatever bits of the sutras (scriptures) came into their heads. Some of them were reciting gathas from the Abhidharma Kosha. Of course, I should have clung to the handrail in terror of falling, but they were as much at ease as on a level floor. It was amusing.

Then came the announcement that our rooms were ready, and they brought slippers and helped us out. There were crowds of pilgrims, some of them with coats wrong-side-out to make the better show with a decent lining, but others in formal Chinese coats, and they all shuffled away in slippers and over-boots along the corridors, which was an amusing sight and very like the attendance at the Palace.

The acolytes and other young men who were free of the temple were posted here and there to warn us :

“Here it goes down.” “Here you go up.”

There was a group of people ahead of us—I had not the least idea who—and our guides went on to them and said :

"Be good enough to stand aside. People of extremely high rank are following you. Pray stand aside!"

Some of them obeyed and drew back respectfully, but others paid no attention and scurried on to secure front places in the worship of the Buddha.

Many people were lined up on both sides on the way to the chapel, and it was uncomfortable to squeeze between them, but when I beheld the altar rails I forgot all else in a feeling of reverence and could only wonder why I had deserted it and had not come to worship for so long. The old religious feeling stirred again within me.

In the sanctuary the lights were not the ordinary ones. Beautiful lamps offered by pilgrims were lit up gloriously and the image of the Buddha glittered with radiance. Many priests of high rank came up in turn and sat on the high seat, each holding a letter in his hand (containing a prayer or dedication from some client) and read it aloud in an attitude of deep reverence. There was so much noise going on that one could hardly hear the words plainly. Still, from the confused voices one caught my ear—small but distinct.

"This offering of a thousand lamps is from So-and-so——"

(Her own, therefore she was on the watch for it.)

So, just as I was going to prostrate myself—with the utmost dignity—an acolyte came up

bearing a bough of Chinese anise and offered it to me for use as my own offering. It was a charmingly courteous action and pleased me exceedingly.

From behind the rail a priest came presently and spoke to me.

"I think I performed your little service as you would have wished. And how long do you stay?" adding before he went off that such and such people were here for a long visit.

Soon afterwards the brazier for us and some fruit were carried to our rooms with our washing apparatus, consisting of a small water-tub with water and a washing-basin with no handles.

"Your servants' rooms are ready elsewhere," was announced to everyone, and off went the servants.

Then came the pealing of the bell announcing the recitation of a scripture giving a most comforting sense of good and peace surrounding one.

Close to my room a young man, evidently of good birth, was worshipping privately and with the utmost devotion. He seemed to have a deep sense of piety and really continued his prayers all night without sleep. It quite touched me, for when he was not praying he was reciting a scripture in a very low voice. I really honoured him. I thought he might have recited it a little louder, but even when he blew his nose he did it very quietly. I wondered what was on his mind and hoped his prayer would be granted.

When I was here before for a long stay it was always very quiet in the daytime—tedious indeed, for those in attendance on us used to go off to the priests' rooms. Then suddenly someone would blow a great conch-shell near my room and startle me to death. Or perhaps messengers would come with beautifully prepared letters of thanks for special services, and, shouting for the acolytes to receive them, their voices echoed far and away.

Then the cymbals would ring more swiftly and agitatedly, and I would listen and wonder what it was all about and could catch the sound of some woman's name and the prayer for her safety in childbirth. I shared the anxiety and joined in the prayer.

But the quiet times in the temple are those when no special services are held. About the New Year, even in the daytime, crowds of people are here for worship. I own it is interesting to watch, but it destroys all personal peace in worshipping.

Some people who came to pray after nightfall were to stay the night. It was curious to see how cleverly the little acolytes managed the enormously high screens so difficult for them to move, and dragged the mats against the other side and let down the bamboo blinds with a rushing noise. It looks quite easy for those accustomed to do it.

Many people came out one after another and

I supposed they were going home. An old Court-lady, evidently of good birth, gave her instructions quietly :

"Be careful or you will have a fire. These rooms are very dangerous," she said.

I was interested in a child of theirs, a boy of seven or eight who called his servants and spoke to them in a distinguished, haughty little voice. And there was a baby of about three, perfectly dazed with sleep, coughing a little and calling for her nurse and mother. It was all rather lovely, and I should have liked to know who they were.

All through the night a perfectly stentorian service went on and not a wink could I sleep ! After the earliest service I slept a little and then someone began to recite the Kwannon Scripture in a kind of bellow which certainly had no beauty about it. It might have been some up-country priest come to study here, and I own that though it surprised me it moved me.

There was, however, a well-born-looking man not at the general night service but a special one. He wore full trousers of a bluish-grey, very stiff, and several white dresses one above the other. He was beautifully dressed and had many retainers, who were all well dressed and surrounded him with the utmost observance, though he looked almost a boy. It interested me immensely. They put up screens temporarily for the service. One felt a sort of respect even without seeing his

face, though a well-known face is very interesting when one realises who it is.

Generally speaking, the young people kept about the private rooms, taking very little notice of the shrine, and called the stewards and whispered together and went out, but I don't think they really meant any harm.

At the end of February or the beginning of March, about cherry-blossom time, it was delightful to pay a long visit to this temple. Two or three handsome men came *incogniti* in coats of cherry-colour or willow-green, very trim, especially with the full trousers girt up high. Nothing could be more distinguished, and one of their retainers—a good-looking fellow—was carrying a beautifully embroidered lunch-bag. Other retainers in hunting-dress of red plum-colour and green were holding cherry boughs. The noblemen came in with these retainers, who were beating a small gong. It was really a charming sight.

Sometimes I see someone through my bamboo blind and half wonder if it would be a possible *he*. But how could he know I am here for a long visit, in any case? He passes by my room. It is not that I want to see him. Only a vague discontent.

The truth is that a long stay in the temple or an expedition to visit unknown places is not interesting if one has only one's servants to fall back on. It is better to have broad-minded friends with

whom one can talk over the various interests. No doubt some of my servants may be interesting enough, but one knows them too well to trouble about them. I gather that men, generally speaking, feel as I do, for they take pains to collect a pleasant party when they are off anywhere.

THE FIRE

When we were with Mama, the wet-nurse of the Empress's brother, in the room of one of the Empress's sisters, a man came almost weeping to say :

"I am in terrible trouble. Will anyone give me a hand ?"

"What has happened ?" we all asked.

"Why, I had to go out on a job, and my wretched house took fire and was burned down, and now I have to sponge on other people for shelter. It began in the Imperial Mews, which is close by, with only a fence between, and a child sleeping in my room was nearly burnt to a cinder. I saved not so much as a hair-pin !"

The way he talked was so funny that, beginning with Princess Mikushige, we all laughed. I scribbled a poem and said to the wet-nurse, "Just toss it to him !"

"A spring-day fire !

It burned the Imperial fodder,

But should it not have spared the noble bedroom !"

She burst out laughing and tossed it to him.

"Here's a sympathetic lady who makes you this offering."

"But what is this card? How much does she give me?" he asked.

"Well, hadn't you better read it?" said she.

"How can I read when I don't know how?"

Someone put in, laughing:

"Well, you had better get someone to do it for you. We are going off to the Empress. But all your anxieties are over with such a gift as *that* in your hand!"

We were all laughing heartily as we trooped off up to the Presence.

Said the wet-nurse:

"What I wonder is whether he'll show it to anyone. He'll be furious when he finds out what it is!"

We were all laughing so loudly that the Empress said, laughing herself:

"Lunatics! What is the matter?"

EXTINCT VOLCANOES

When we meet unexpectedly or he asks me to come and meet him, To no Chujyo says:

"But why are we not lovers still? I shall never believe you hate me, and we should not end so coolly. For long years we have been intimate, and I want to preserve that charming memory.

Supposing I could not come up to the Palace any more ? ”

I said :

“ Certainly I should like to resume our relation. The only thing is that I should then have to stop praising you before the Empress and the ladies, and that would be a pity. Why not just remain friends ? It would be really rather uncomfortable, because I couldn't say a word in your favour—I should be suspecting people's guesses, you know.”

He laughed, saying :

“ Now, why should you feel like that ? Many married people praise themselves more than anybody else.”

“ Quite all right for them if they don't mind it themselves. But I should be dreadfully uncomfortable. And if a man and woman love one another, when people abuse either, they flare up at once,” said I.

It was amusing to hear him.

“ Silly idiots ! ” he said.

THE EXORCIST'S ASSISTANT

The young assistant who serves the exorcist seems always to be perfect in his part. When the exorcist is ready he reads the invocation loudly and clearly. People take it for granted, but I always think it amazingly clever. Moreover, he

moves with the utmost adroitness and pours the pure water and all entirely without orders, knowing every turn and making all run so smoothly that it is unnecessary for his master to say a single word. I declare it makes me envious. If only I could find such a treasure to serve me !

AT KIYOMIDZU

When I was staying at Kiyomidzu, I sat listening to the cicadas one day. They were singing their plaintive song when a special messenger arrived from the Empress with a letter for me. It was written on Chinese paper of a faintly red tint :

" Mountain and evening bell !
 Count on each golden note
 How my heart longs for you.
 So in my heart I count
 All your long stay."

I had had no thought of preparation and had no suitable paper for ceremony with me, so I wrote my reply on the rosy petal of a lotus.

(The petal of an artificial lotus used in the temple service.)

KAMO SHRINE

On the way to worship at Kamo Shrine, I saw many women with flat head-dresses standing and

singing the cuckoo song. It was monotonous, and it looked like nothing but bending and rising and then stepping backward. I wondered what they were doing. While I was enjoying the sight their song reached my ears. Highly unflattering to the cuckoo !

“Cuckoo, you brute ! Why do you cry ?
For then I must gird my skirts up high.
And away to work in the rice-field.”

I am not sure what class they were, but someone said a good word for the cuckoo—“Her song is charming !” As a matter of fact, I quite disagree with those who say the cuckoo is inferior to the bush warbler.

On the 10th of every month the Empress offered a mass for the spirit of her father—Lord Michitake. On the 10th September many officers were present. The preacher was Seihan the priest, and he dwelt upon such sorrowful things that everybody—even young people who one would never suppose could be moved by anything—were weeping. After the service was over, when we were having refreshments and reciting poems, Tadanobu began :

“Moon and autumn still promise return,
But he, alas, where has he vanished ?”

Splendid ! Happy man to remember the exactly right thing at the exactly right time ! I threaded

through a crowd to the Empress. She was just coming out and said :

"Beautiful indeed and perfectly chosen for to-day."

"Yes," I replied, "I was coming on purpose to repeat it in the Presence, but delayed a moment to look at something. I think it exquisite."

She said :

"And you—you would feel his success more deeply than most."

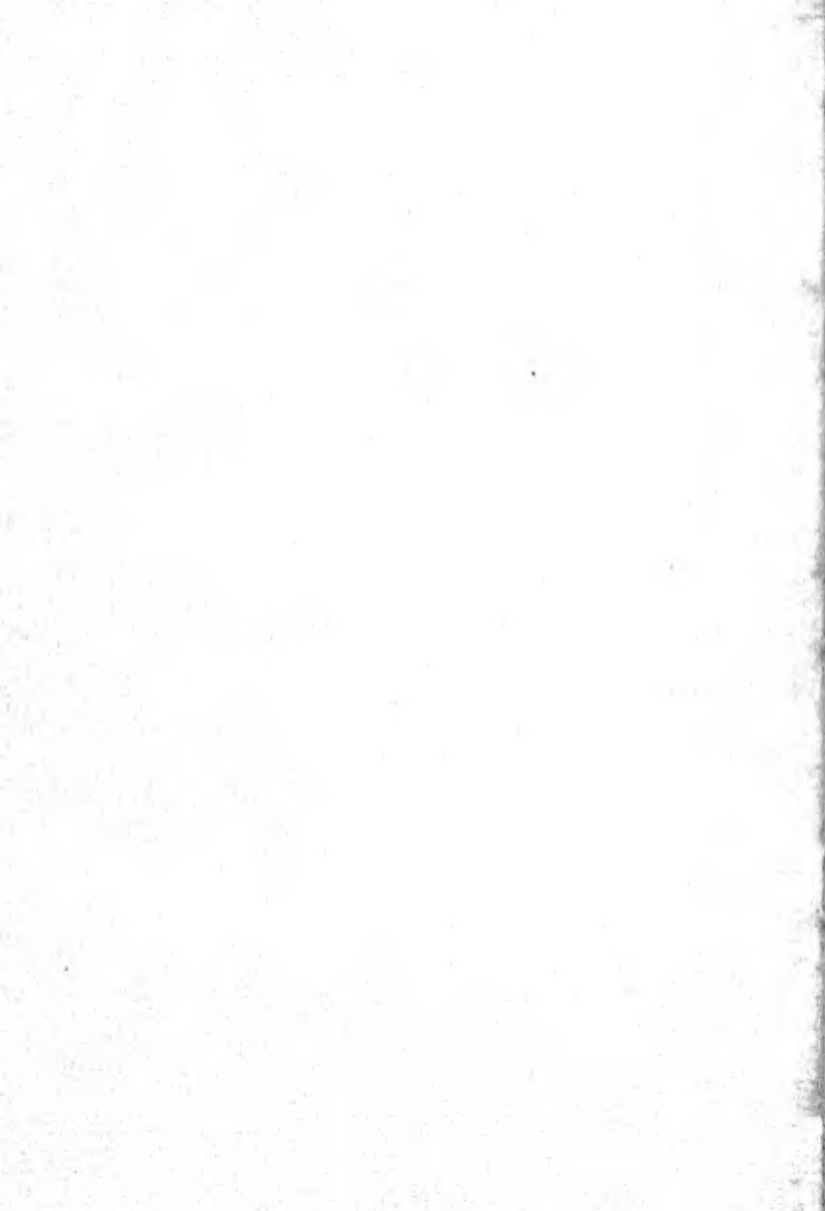
(Being intimate friends. The poem is as follows :

"Alas, our life is transient, how shall we understand it ?

In the valley where blossom the flowers the master alone
returns not.

He who loved the moon has trysted to come and meet her.
Autumn and moon keep tryst,

But he, ah, where has he vanished ? ")



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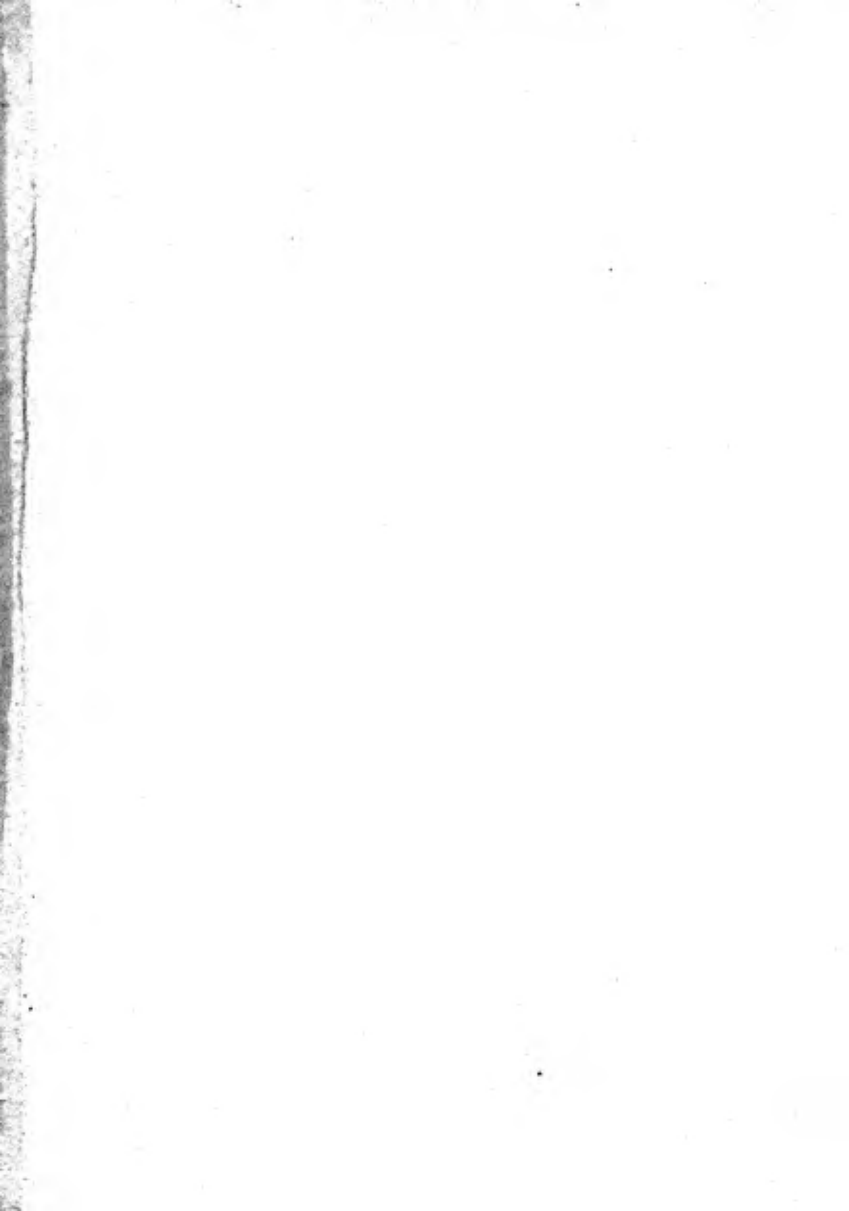
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